





Poland in the World of Democracy

By

ANTHONY J. ZIELINSKI

With an Introductory Letter by the
Most Rev. J. J. Glennon
Archbishop of St. Louis

and

An Introduction by
John W. Weeks
U. S. Senator from Massachusetts

and

A Foreword by
Laura de Gozdawa Turczynowicz
Author of "When the Prussians Came to Poland"

" . . . statesmen everywhere are agreed
that there should be a united, independent and
autonomous Poland."

—Woodrow Wilson, January 22, 1917

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“The Poles no longer have a common country, but they have a common language. They will remain, then, united by the strongest and most durable of all bonds. They will arrive, under foreign domination, to the age of manhood, and the moment they reach that age, will not be far from that in which, emancipated, they will all be attached once more to one center.”

Talleyrand, after the Council of Vienna, 1815.

“Oh, my Poland, thou art on the threshold of thy victory. Let it be only seen that thou art the eternal enemy of all evil and then shall the bonds of death be broken. In the last moment, when death struggles against life, amid the sobs of despair, the wails of dying lips, in the strength of thy martyrdom overcome that moment, conquer that pain, and thou shalt rise as the queen of all Slavonia, to dry human tears and to rule the world of souls.”

Sigismund Krasinski.

**TO
MY SISTER
ANTOINETTE.**

AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

January 26, 1917.

My dear Mr. Zielinski:

The manuscript you have been kind enough to have me look over is well worthy of perusal. It shows conclusively that nations, like men, do not live by bread alone; and that they have a future as long as they have a soul.

That Ireland and Poland have souls is abundantly proved by the fact that they are alive; and since they are alive and have souls, they have also a future—a future that we can jointly hope will be filled with liberty and progress and peace. Just today the rights of the conquered are few, and they are made to suffer unspeakably; yet, out of the war is sure to come a deeper and broader acceptance of the right of the individual nation to live and thrive, and expand within the sphere of their own genius; and in the assertion of their own rights.

When this principle is fully established, Ireland and Poland shall again take their place; and that an honored one among the nations of the earth.

Yours very sincerely,

John J. Glennon,
Archbishop of St. Louis.

INTRODUCTION BY JOHN W. WEEKS,
UNITED STATES SENATOR
FROM MASSACHUSETTS.

The task of making Poland and Polish aspirations known to the American people can very properly be regarded as a patriotic undertaking at this time. The aspirations of Poland for freedom are identical with the aspirations which stirred the American Colonists, and when we remember that from far-distant Poland two valiant warriors came from under the White Eagle to give their aid to the infant Republic, an obligation rests upon the Americans to respond to the call of Poland in this present emergency.

The Pole in America has established a position for himself worthy of attention and respect. Although the great bulk of the 4,000,000 immigration is very recent, the nation has already begun to contribute doctors, lawyers, professional men of distinction, and stalwart, vigorous fighters. In my own State of Massachusetts, they have won a high reputation because of their industry, because of their honesty, and also because of the unswerving and whole-hearted loyalty with which they have supported American war aims.

The Pole in America needs no eulogy, but the business of making the Pole in Poland, his aspirations and achievements, and the history of his country known to the American people is of vital importance. It is inevitable when the time comes for peace discussion—and this situation will prevail even if we secure the unconditional surrender of the Germans in the field—that the Central Allies will devote their energies to an attempt to hold sway over the Mittel Europa territory they now control and of which Poland forms so vital a part. Unless the American people are educated in Polish affairs, there is a grave and serious danger that the character of the peace conferences may be outside their understanding, and that the American people as a whole will find themselves confused in their attempt to follow issues of which they have but a slight knowledge.

As I understand it, it is to correct that situation and to prepare the American people against this possibility that this book has been written, and I take pleasure in endorsing the patriotic spirit of the author.

John W. Weeks.

FOREWORD BY MADAME
LAURA DE GOZDAWA TURCZYNOWICZ,
Author of "When the Prussians Came to Poland."
THE POLISH QUESTION.

Who shall classify it—or express the tremendous importance to humanity of the just—and righteous settlement of the future status of that martyred land, Poland?

There is one side of the Polish question which has been industriously exploited by the Germans—the lack of unity of purpose among the Polish people. True—but stop just one moment to consider that for one hundred and fifty years, three governments, Russia, Austria and Germany, have done their utmost to separate and bring about misunderstanding among the Poles—forcing them to speak a language not their own, flogging even little children in Prussian Poland for saying their prayers in their mother's tongue, separating them by boundary lines and regulations difficult to bear, forcing the men of one family to serve in three different armies, if the estates of a family were in different parts of what was all only Poland.

When once this fact reaches the mind of any *thinking* man or woman, that man or woman MUST admire that Polish people and their hearts of gold, which held always the love of Poland, and prayed for her freedom.

Upon one question every Pole agrees—there is no dissenting voice—the Freedom of Poland, and her right to stand among the nations.

Poland has been so carefully misrepresented among the nations, that it is difficult to get the case of Poland fairly tried. Those not understanding, are apt to think in extremes, either that Poland was a land of romance, where everybody played the piano marvelously, or sang—or else dug in coal mines, if they did not belong to those who could claim wonderful titles and lived in the strange old palaces of Poland.

Few people understand that these people, who have made such heroic struggles, just for the right to speak their own language, are even as other people, with the same capacity to suffer, and with how much greater capacity to be happy! In those days before the war, how they understood to lay their burdens down, the burdens

which were even then intolerable, to forget themselves in dancing the beautiful and poetic dances of Poland. Truly a gallant people, greatly misunderstood of the world.

To America, the free, the great Democracy—Poland, the Democracy of Ages past, is looking for a helping hand. A helping hand reached out as to a brother—to help her to her feet—to hold her erect—when she is on her feet.

Every Polish heart would give its last drop of blood for the man who is the first real friend they have found—who has spoken for them, advocating Freedom for Poland—President Woodrow Wilson. The very mention of his name gives a Polish audience a thrill, as no other name does—for he said Poland should be “free and united.”

Polish people have had many promises made them, but all because someone wished to make use of them, and, therefore, promises without value. President Wilson gave his message to the world only because it was just and proper.

So we, who love Poland, look forward to a free, United Poland, with the right to the pursuit of happiness, and to worship God in their own way.

Then shall the Polish History be written anew, and truly—her art and literature given to the world.

To America shall then come the thanks of that freed people, for all she had done. For the American Red Cross, which has built up the devastated land, and been a mother to her people.

It will all come about some day, and we shall look back to the suffering, calm in the existing FREEDOM and PEACE, with thankful hearts that the Heavenly Father has remembered His Polish children.

Polish Politics—alas ! they exist. We pray the self-seekers guiding them shall also be swept away in the flood of Sunny Freedom, for the real politics of Poland is only Democracy, with all the deepest meaning of the word. No Kings ! No aristocracy—just people—and a Government of the people—by the people !

Laura de Gozdawa Turczynowicz.

NOTE.

With the exception of four, these chapters were serially published in the Free Poland. Some are here reprinted in the same form and under the same titles as published in that periodical; others were given a different title and lost much of their original form in the process of revision and reconstruction.

They were, of course, originally written as contributions to the Free Poland, and it was only after they had received a favorable comment from the Polish press and been freely reprinted in several representative papers and periodicals, and after it had been urged that their publication in book form would render a definite service to the Polish Cause, that the writer consented to gather them in this book.

A. J. Z.

St. Louis, Mo., 1918.

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

THE POLISH QUESTION AND THE FUTURE WORLD PEACE.

“An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.”

—President Wilson to the Senate, January 8,
1918.

With Russia apparently disintegrating politically, with Prussianized Germany pressing her policy in the East and with America in the war to suppress Prussian autocracy and to bring liberty to the smaller nations, Poland's reconstruction took the first rank in the war issue. Since the time hostilities were struck, the Polish Question discarded its swaddling clothes of an “internal question,” and changed its less pretentious name of a European problem to that of a world problem of such vital importance, that in self-respect and for its own salvation, the world

of Democracy must restore Poland her birthright to freedom and independence.

The fundamental root of the Polish question lies deep in the Polish history. Five centuries ago, Poland had already been an ancient kingdom. From the reign of Casimir the Great, 1333, to the time of Sobieski, 1674-96, Poland was the greatest state in Europe. In the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Poles were one of the most cultured nations on the continent.

The territory of Poland reached, at its fullest expansion, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, North and South, and from the Oder to the Bug, West and East. This territorial expansion was rendered possible by Lithuania uniting to Poland in 1386, and by Ruthenia seeking and actually succeeding in uniting herself to Poland not long after.

The Union of Lithuania with Poland stands forth as the greatest historical fact in Central Europe. It brought immense advantage to the national development of the Poles and the Lithuanians, and it rendered a huge service to civilization, because, so united, the two people were

enabled all the more to check the advance of Germanism East, and the outpour of the Asiatic hordes West. In fact, the reason why Lithuania joined Poland was to make herself and Poland safe against German propaganda that was carried through the agency of the Knights of the Cross. Here is an object lesson both to the Poles and the Lithuanians, and to the statesmen who will remake Europe. For the danger which confronted the two people in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, is confronting them again at this time, and unless a free and united Poland and Lithuania work out their national destinies in concert and union, neither they nor the world will be safe against the Prussian aim of world dominion.

What the world suffers from the weird Prussianism today, Poland suffered five hundred years ago. And what the world learned of the selfish aim of Prussia today, in Poland every child knew for centuries past.

Germany originally extended up to the Oder. East of this river lived a Slavic people. Pomerania was a Slavic province belonging to Poland,

and Silesia was anything but a German territory. By inroads, murderous raids, by treason and intrigues, by fomenting divisions and setting up small kingdoms among these peoples, exactly as they are doing at present, the Germans suppressed and swallowed them up one after the other. The German expansion in the East reached its greatest area towards the close of the fourteenth century. Through the agency of the Knights of the Cross, Prussianism engulfed Courland, Livonia and Estonia, and would have devoured, no doubt, Lithuania and Poland, had these two nations not united and signally defeated the German Princes in the famous battle of Grunwald, 1410. But for Grunwald, Prussia would have long ago annexed the countries and destroyed the peoples she has recently taken possession of, and realized her dream of a Pan-Germany. And she would have, beyond all doubt, reached a point where Democracy were powerless to overcome it.

But the Prussian danger was not the only problem Poland had by her very geographic posi-

tion and ethnic tendency to deal with. From the East and the South, the Muscovites, the Tartars and the Turks kept constantly pressing West. Warna in 1444, and Vienna in 1638, were only two of a hundred places where Poland saved Western civilization from its inevitable destruction by these unbridled hordes. Poland spent half of her life as sentinel, sword in hand, gun leveled and eye strained, watching for the troublesome enemy to spring to her doom and to the doom of Europe. Precisely for this reason the manifold internal progress that characterized Poland from her inception is all the more worthy of notice. Already in 1347 Casimir the Great, who is not improperly called the Polish Charlemagne, instituted the Statutes of Wislica. They were the Magna Charta of Poland, and were promulgated shortly after Frederick II of Germany published his laws, and St. Louis of France declared his Institutes of Law. As far back as 1430, Poland issued her memorable law: *Neminem captivabimus nisi jure victum*, which antedated the famous English law: *Habeas Corpus*, by nearly two centuries and a half.

In Education, Poland marvelously kept abreast with other nations. The University of Cracow, founded by Casimir the Great in 1364, at once became the main center of education in the Near East. It reached its full tide of fame and efficiency in the age of the Humanities, when scholars from Italy and France, Spain and Germany crowded her halls. The great Polish astronomer, Copernicus, was taught at this University. Oxford was not more to England, and the University of Paris to France, than the Jagiellonian University was to Poland and to the Near Eastern Countries.

But the worst “encomium” that had been attributed to the Poles as a nation, was that they were not able to self-govern and that their “anarchy” and the “Liberum Veto” brought them to a pass, where they seemingly stood helpless, calling upon foreign Powers to help them out of their inextricable chaos. And it became a fashion with historians and non-historians alike to insist upon the “anarchy” in Poland as the one reason of her downfall, and to speak of the weak points in the Polish government with a nineteenth and twentieth century mind, which has been inured

to admiring the elaborated systems of democratic governments. The common mistake has been to give credit to the free nations for the progress they made since the partition of Poland, and comparing twentieth century nations to Poland of the seventeenth century. Nearly everyone who professes to have any knowledge of Polish history will tell you with that bluntness that either bespeaks a strong conviction or total misinformation, if not ignorance, that the Poles were not able to self-govern, though he will concede that the century and a half under foreign rule made them as fit as any nation to work out their own independent national life.

It came to be common knowledge since the war opened how historical facts can be distorted and made to suit particular aims. And what was easier for the enemies of Poland than to proclaim and keep repeating it to the world that the Poles were unable to self-govern, and that they had to be taken care of. The time was very well suited for that propaganda. France had her own troubles. England and Spain were perhaps too far to be interested in Poland. America was an

infant Republic. Besides, it was only the present war that developed the thesis in Europe that it is wrong not to safeguard, and even enter war for, the interests of another nation without looking for material gain.

It should be remembered that to speak of "anarchy" as the cause of Poland's downfall is to speak of a period in the Polish history, as the attempt has been made to show in the chapter: "The So-Called Polish Anarchy," covering about eighty years, and extending from the beginning of the seventeenth century down to the first partition. This was the time when foreigners principally occupied the Polish throne, and when the Liberum Veto proved a fatal weapon in the hands of foreign candidates for the throne. This is clearly a very short period in the long Polish history, which was particularly noted for an exemplary governmental efficiency. Besides, there was practically no country in Europe at that time to be free from political disturbances, invariably worse than those in Poland. Italy had her anarchy. France had hers. Spain was not free from it. Germany especially was rent with

strifes and political upheavals, which came perhaps to their most critical pass in the time of Sobieski's victory over the Turks at Vienna. Had any of these countries occupied the territorial position of Poland, nothing is so certain than that they would have met the doom of Poland, and declared, after their fall, incapable of self-government like the Poles.

The *Liberum Veto* which is invariably found on the lips of those who are not particularly friendly to Poland, was not exactly that assinine institution which had its origin in some chronic governmental inaptitude, but it was a logical, though a rather excessive, development of the unadulterated democratic bent of the Poles. It must be remembered that in practical application, outside of the short period of its abuse, it was a principle of the majority and the minority. Its complete abolition, however, by the Constitution of the Third of May, 1791, should be remembered along with the short period when it wrought evil.

But the Pole today can point out with pride that his nation had never been given to that

tribalism and imperialism which plunged the world in such horrors, menacing Right and Freedom and Liberty. Had the Powers devoted their time to studying and copying the Democracy of Poland instead of partitioning her, the world would have been spared the horrors of the present war. America would not need to declare war on Germany in an effort to make the world safe for Democracy. For Poland would have made Democracy safe for the world. Europe would have long ago formed a league of nations, working out their national life in peace and concert, even as Poland and Lithuania and Ruthenia worked out their political life in peace and concert.

Another common misconception in the average mind is, that Poland was so weakened by strifes and intrigues that the neighboring Powers simply walked in as a matter of fact and took what territory they pleased. The fact is, that the Poles were just so weak and so indifferent as were the Belgians and the Servians when Prussian imperialism trampled them into the earth. And the usurping Powers were just as free to take their territory as they were free to take Belgium and

Servia. Poland was brought to her knees by the grasping imperialism at a time when the most sweeping reforms enlivened every vein of her life, promising the best results both to herself and to the world. The Commission of Education, which was really the first Ministry of Education in Europe, was at once a further development of the medieval intellectualism of the Poles, and a starting point to that exuberant intellectual growth that characterized the Poles under foreign rule. The Constitution of the Third of May was an embodiment and a synthesis of that political polish of the Poles, which became a part and portion of them for centuries before they reluctantly bent their knee to Might. The systematic economic and industrial reforms and progress, which was brought to life while the last partition had yet twenty years to come, constituted a happy antecedent to that phenomenal economic and industrial progress, which the Poles achieved to the dismay of their usurpers. And as to living in the spirit of their Constitution of the Third of May, what people have been more single-eyed and whole-hearted in their support of Democracy both here in America and abroad?

But the sterling qualities of the Poles which made the world admire them and pronounce them the fittest of the suppressed nations to self-govern, would mean little to Democracy had they not made possible a united and independent Poland, and had this Poland not helped to carry out the war program as outlined by the Allied governments. Civilization has reached a point where it is unsafe to consider the welfare of one people, or one group of peoples, as an isolated fact. And Humanity has wisely resolved that either Prussianism wins the struggle, and the freedom of the world vanishes for centuries, or Democracy wins, and nations will be left free to work out their own destinies, "unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the strong and the powerful." But history and the sinister war aims of the Prussian war lords point out with a clearness that cannot be mistaken, that unless Poland is restored her freedom, nothing can stop Prussia from realizing her dream of the Mittel Europa, and from eventually subduing and enslaving the world.

To re-establish Poland, then, is not merely to restore justice to a down-trodden people, who

would at once become the sixth greatest nation in Europe. But it is to build a cornerstone to Democracy. It is to wreck Prussia's "Mittel Europa" scheme. It is to destroy the inevitable Prussian plan for a world dominion.

Open the map of Europe as drawn by the Pan-Germanists. From Calais to Petrograd, the Baltic sea is called the German lake. Sweden, Norway and Denmark in the North, Belgium, Holland and a part of France in the West, Lithuania and Poland in the East, and Ruthenia with Odessa and the Balkan States in the South, are marked for inclusion in the Prussian project of world dominion. Think of the Baltic provinces falling into Prussian hands, think of the countries and peoples that would be added to Germany by Prussia drawing a line from the Gulf of Finland southeastward to the Sea of Azof. Think of the double route—one through Russia, the other through the Balkan States—that would lead Germany to the wealth of the Far East in the incredible event she retained control over the Near Eastern countries, and you can imagine the attempted world enslavement by Prussianism.

Nothing but a complete victory of the Allies, and an immediate rectification of the Near Eastern question on the principle of nationalism and complete independence is going to save the world for Democracy.

The present seizure and domination by Germany of the countries in the Near East is not a war measure that is to cease with the cessation of hostilities. It is a political and commercial project which Germany had planned long before the war, and which inspires every Prussian from the Kaiser down to his lowest "Diener." The spirit of the Pan-Germanists, which is openly cultivated by the "Alldeutscher Verband" is a disconcerting proof of the wide following official Germany has in her project of a "Welt-politik."

"Open the map," says Naumann in the midst of the war, "and see what lies between the Vistula and the Vosges, what between Galicia and the Bodensee! This area can be conceived only as a unit, as a well-articulated brotherland, as a confederation of defense, as a self-sufficing economic district." "Some one should make room; either the Slavs of the West or the South, or ourselves!"

As we are the strongest, the choice will not be difficult. . . . A greater Germany is possible only through a struggle with Europe," says Tannenberg in his book, "Gross-Deutschland," published in 1911 in Leipsic. Or read what Tannenberg says in another passage of the same book: "On the one side, Greater Germany, a world power, a country industrial and commercial; on the other, the Magyars, the Rumanians, the Serbs, the Bulgars, the Albanians, the Greeks—peoples exclusively cultural. . . . By that accord, the commerce of the East, of Syria, of Mesopotamia would fall into our hands." Or recall the words of Prince von Bulow: "It is a law of life and development in history that where two national civilizations meet, they fight for ascendancy. In the struggle between nationalities, one nation is the hammer and the other the anvil; one is the victor and the other the vanquished." "We must not put might before right, but equally little shall we and can we dispense with might. In the future, as in the past, the German people will have to seek firm cohesion in its glorious army and in its belaureled young fleet," writes Lieuten-

ant-General Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven, Deputy Chief of the German General Staff.

In the face of this annexationist spirit that possesses official Germany, and in the face of her avowed political doctrines that underlie this spirit, in the face of the loot she is grasping from the famished peoples in the East, and the plans she lays in the East preparatory to swallowing up these peoples and annexing their territory—it is forcibly plain how hypocritical are her claims, that she is freeing these unfortunate peoples from the “Russian” despotism, which no longer exists.

To obtain something like a comprehensive scope of the danger that lies to Democracy in the “Made in Germany” countries in the Near East, it is sufficient to recall Germany’s policy towards the Poles in Posen and West Prussia and Silesia, and the people of Alsace-Lorraine. And, to understand the duties of Democracy here, it is sufficient to understand what an undefeated Prussia would do in case she retained control over the kingdoms she set up with an ulterior purpose. What Prussia did to the Poles in Posen, and to

the Alsatians in Alsace-Lorraine, that she would do to the peoples in Russian Poland, Finland and Lithuania and Ruthenia. There is no reason to try to believe that Prussia's first task after the war would be other than to extirpate the enslaved peoples on her Eastern border. But there is every reason to show that an undefeated German Empire would use every atom of its energy and every ounce of its resources to the realization of a Pan-Germany as outlined, for instance, by Tannenberg.

In the unbelievable event of a German victory, what would be the fate of the Near Eastern peoples? The answer is dazzlingly simple.

In thirty years Prussia would have enslaved over 50,000,000 people, and incorporated into her state an area as great as the present Germany. From the cessation of the war up to about 1940, Prussia's chief aim in the East would be to realize the dream of her Pan-Germany propagandists, by measures which are altogether too well known to the world. With a hypocrisy and malicious astuteness that are characteristically Prussian, Germany would at first surround the natives

with her “protectorate,” while under its cover, she would carry on a denationalization policy which would make these unfortunate peoples permanent martyrs, and the Prussian officials, permanent oppressors. Prussian institutions and laws would so limit their activity that they would become mere automatons to the Prussian war god.

With Dantzig, Riga and Libau and Odessa in Prussia’s grip, and with Prussian officials at the arteries of their economic and political life, the lot of these peoples would be that of the medieval serfs. From morning till night the Lithuanians and the Poles and the Ruthenians would be forced by every economic and political pressure to till the soil to feed the Prussian officials, and Prussian ammunition producers. They would be required to feed the full and numerous regiments that would form and drill to be led, in the nearest possible future, to the conquest of such peoples as might till that time succeed in escaping the Prussian “Kultur.”

The millions of marks, which but yesterday the Reichstag voted for the expropriation of the Poles in Posen—the forcible imposition of the Prussian “Kultur” into the Polish schools there—the national indignity and political proscription the Poles suffered at the hand of Prussia up to the war, must not only strike fear into the hearts of the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Finns and the Ruthenians—when they see Prussianism hover over them, but frighten peoples separated from Prussia by seas. In thirty years their land would be fairly in the Prussian grip. Impoverished by the war, and made to pay heavy taxes to help mend the Prussian state, the natives would be forced to sell their land into German hands. And with the land in the hands of German land-owners, Prussia would consider the countries naturally hers. The natives would be labeled as foreigners, and not unlikely, expatriated, as thousands of Poles were expatriated from Posen in the time of Bismarck. Should Prussia become victorious, or, at any rate, not beaten to her knees, Germanization of these countries would

most naturally take the widest sweep. In this incredible event, it would not be long when Prussia would declare it a crime for the Finns, the Lithuanians and Ruthenians to speak any other language but the German. With "Mittel Europa" under her foot, Prussia would order the whole world to bend its knee to her "Kultur."

Prussia's attempt in creating the various phantom kingdoms in the Near East is the meanest hypocritical move Prussian glory-drunk mind has yet been father to. It is a vicious travesty on the program of the allied nations. It is a political mockery and an insult to the Allies and to the unfortunate nationalities concerned. Self-glory is Prussia's object. Enslavement of these miserable peoples, her goal. A cornerstone to Germany's future world dominion is laid here by Prussia. A menace of the future world peace lurks in the "Drang Nach Osten" Germany.

The projected usurpation by Prussia of Poland and the other countries, involves a problem which acutely touches the world. It concerns America

no less than it concerns Europe, because were Prussia to succeed in her schemes in the East, the time would not be far off when the Prussian junkers would divide America as they divided Poland a century and more ago.

CHAPTER II. POLAND'S HISTORICAL RIGHT (EXTERNAL).

“From the reign of Chrobry the Great, to the Crime of 1772, the chivalry of Poland repelled ninety-two Tartar invasions, any one of which, if successful, would have at least jeopardized the existence of European civilization.”

—Parsons—History of the Polish Catholicity and the Russian “Orthodoxy.” Vol. V, p. 74.

What is the history of Poland's titles: “The Most Orthodox,” “The Greatest Medieval Commonwealth,” “The Bulwark of Christendom”? What advantage have they brought to Humanity, and do they constitute factors to positively react on the Polish problem today?

From the tenth century up to the time of the Partitions, 1770, Poland possessed a territory which, for extent, was in keeping with her political splendor. “In size¹ Poland outranks nearly

¹ Showalter—Historic—Geographical Study.

every nation of the continent, even now Russia alone of the European nations is larger than Poland was at her greatest. In population she stood at the forefront of Europe; only Russia and Germany today have greater populations than are to be found on the lands that once were Poland; for unpartitioned Poland had an area of 272,000 square miles and the lands that once lay within her boundaries, now support a population of fifty million. In area she was as large as the German Empire, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland and Denmark together; there dwells at present a population larger than that of France, Belgium and Holland combined."

Poland, in the course of her history, had power to arrest the growth of her neighbors, who later conspired to divide her. Prussia was originally a Polish province, and Albrecht of Brandenburg was made by Poland, in the early part of the sixteenth century, prince of Prussia, with the stipulation that he and his successors forever remain vassals to the Polish King. Matejko, the eminent Polish painter, immortalized the Prussian vassalage to Poland by his famous painting,

“The Prussian Bringing Tribute.” To the world, Matejko’s picture means a piece of art. But to the Poles, it pictures the past, when Poland was the kind mistress to the very same Prussians who now are her cruel oppressors. It brings to their mind that every Prussian prince paid homage to the Kings of Poland until the end of the seventeenth century. Under King Batory, Poland held complete dominion over Russia. The Russians even insisted that the Polish King allow his son to rule over them. But the latter, for religious and racial reasons, justly declined their royal sceptre, and Poland, far from usurping the conquered country, left it totally to its own rule. Austria lay at the mercy of Sobieski in 1683, when the Turk besieged Vienna, and Austria had no power to resist the inevitable deluge by the Crescent.

Poland’s sudden appearance among the family of nations was in keeping with the nature of her national mission. It was not until the undefined chaos of peoples began to crystalize into the now nations, not until the Goths and the Huns had disappeared from Western Europe, that Poland

emerged as a nation, with Mieszko as ruler, in the latter part of the ninth century. Poland's territory then embraced the country between the Oder and the Vistula, together with what was then designated as the Cracovian territory. Almost simultaneously with the acquisition of her national franchise, Poland embraced Christianity, at the instance of Mieszko and his pious consort, Dombrowka. From the beginning, religion in Poland became so inseparably linked with patriotism, that even today they are synonymous terms with the Poles.

Mieszko laid the foundation for the Polish commonwealth, while his eldest son and successor, Chrobry, justly surnamed the Great, roughly outlined its super-structure. "Chrobry¹ was one of the greatest princes of the middle ages, whether he be regarded as a warrior, legislator or administrator; in fact, he was the Polish Charlemagne." It is a remarkable fact, that from the inception of her national life, Poland rose to a power that made her one of the principal states of Europe.

¹ Parsons—History of the Polish Catholicity and the Russian "Orthodoxy."

The sudden expansion of Poland from the Baltic to the Black seas, under Chrobry the Great, her military splendor which commanded the respect of the neighboring countries, the visit Otto III of Germany paid the King of Poland with a view to forming an alliance with him, the jurisprudence and administratorship of her prince, the establishment of the first Polish Archbishopric in Gnesen with its dependent Sees, the solemn coronation of Chrobry the Great as King of Poland by the Archbishop of Gnesen—are some of the events to show the unusually rapid national development of the Polish State.

Every nation has its characteristic features to individualize it from other nations. Greece brings to mind poetry, culture and fine arts; Rome, law and militarism; Ireland, persecution for religion; America, freedom and democracy. Poland's characteristic feature is her appreciation of freedom and chivalry founded on religious motives. Parsons gives the key to the Polish Chivalry in motive and end when he says: "From the reign of Chrobry the Great to the Crime of 1772, the Chivalry of Poland repelled ninety-two Tartar

invasions, any one of which, if successful, would have at least jeopardized the existence of European civilization. For many centuries that chivalry was the sole barrier of Europe against the triumph of Muscovite ambition. The reason of the Polish success is to be found not in the unquestionable valor of the Polish heart, but in the religious tie that bound the Poles together.” Van Norman¹ gives a no less comprehensive appreciation of Poland’s characteristic trait or her national mission; he says: “The champion, the knight-errant of Christianity, the Pole became the most devoted, zealous cavalier that ever drew blade in defense of his mistress. For her, the church, he fought, bled and died. While other peoples went after strange gods and sought sordid gain, he expired amid fields of ice or burned out his life on the arid plains of the south. His history is one long crusade in defense of the Holy Church.”

The Poland of Chrobry the Great was ready to meet, though of necessity with disaster to herself, the great Tartar invasion in 1241. Historians do

¹ Poland the Knight Among Nations.

not exaggerate when they say that all Europe would be an easy prey to the Tartars in the early part of the thirteenth century, had not Poland set out 10,000 knights strong, to stay them. Henry the Pious of Poland, a prototype of Sobieski under Vienna, encountered the enemy at Leignitz in 1241. Through strategy and by reason of an overwhelming enemy, the Polish King became defeated, but he stayed the barbarous Tartar, and saved Europe from a calamitous invasion.

But, if there is any event in Polish history to portray the national spirit in its non-aggressiveness and its broad political ideals, and to render a classical service to mankind by stopping the German expansion eastward, and by successfully opposing the idea Prussianism, the way the world struggles against it today—it is the union of Poland with Lithuania, 1569. “And never before,” says Mickiewicz¹, “was there this union of nations. But it shall be afterwards.

“For this union and marriage of Lithuania with Poland is a figure of the future union of all

¹ Books of the Polish Pilgrimage.

Christian nations in the name of knowledge and Freedom." The two nations formed the first commonwealth of its kind in Europe, and rendered a classical example of a democratic government. It was unique and altogether novel for the time for two free and strong nations, with a territory which was greater for extent than that of Germany today, to unite their forces and their hands to forget their ancient feuds and unite in their work for the progress of civilization. So united, the two nations repulsed the Tartars, placed a barrier in the way of the German expansion, and established a Republic under one King, one Treasury and one Parliament, though with separate administration.

The causes that led to the union of Poland with Lithuania were, curiously enough, the same that call for a re-establishment of Poland and her reunion with Lithuania today: the aggressiveness of Prussia. To the Northeast of Poland lay Lithuania, then as yet a pagan country. Further North was a country inhabited by the Prussians, also pagans, and noted for their cruelty and those strange political doctrines which mark them to-

day. Whilst warring among themselves, they made frequent raids on the adjoining Polish provinces, and every effort Poland took to introduce Christian civilization among them, brought but scant results. In a final effort, Poland introduced into her territory, at the instance of Conrad of Masovia, the Teutonic Knights to convert the Prussians.

The Order was not a political but essentially a religious body. The Knights were bound by strict religious vows. They were forbidden to amass wealth, to raise arms against Christian princes and never to establish an independent state. They were missionaries, and as such, Conrad of Masovia invited them into Poland.

Unfortunately, the Teutonic Knights turned out to be, under the cloak of religion, the most unrelenting exterminators of the people they went to convert. They formed a military oligarchy, and, as power came to them, they prostituted the very name of Christianity, and so ruled the Prussians that the latter begged their more powerful neighbors, the Poles, to assist them in throwing off their bondage. Religion with the

Order was simply a convenient cloak to shield a corrupt and rapacious government. Having provoked constant rebellions among their Prussian converts, and nearly exterminated them, the Knights replaced the depopulated country with German colonists, and ruled over them with the iron rod of the despot. Their next object was to overrun and subdue Lithuania, which was then yet pagan. But the latter prudently united with Poland and accepted her civilization in preference to that of the Knights.

Here the predatory inroads of the Knightly missionaries were brought to an end by the then powerful Poland. The religious Order of the Knights, which now assumed the nature of a political body, came to final reckoning with Poland and Lithuania in the memorable battle of Grunwald in 1410. There the Teutonic Knights became so completely defeated as never fully to recover.

The results of the defeat of the Knights by Poland at Grunwald were weighty and far-extensive. And while historians dwell at length on the peaceful conversion and preservation of Lith-

uania under the protection of Poland, the main results, however, that have an international bearing were these: the union of Poland with Lithuania, while they formed the greatest commonwealth of the latter Middle Ages, built on principles of Democracy, created an unbreakable barrier in the East against the yellow races that threatened Western civilization, and a tremendous setback to the development of Prussianism, which today upset the peace of the world.

Even for this benefit she rendered mankind, Poland should never have been deprived of her right to self-government. The integrity of Poland should have been safeguarded as a precious jewel and an invaluable asset to the world. Poland deserved to live. She had a right to self-exist. For the constructive influence she wielded on Western civilization, her spoliation could not be called anything else than worse than crime—a folly, and the greatest political blunder. If the right to self-government Poland earned by what she rendered humanity up to the fourteenth century should evoke the strongest resentment against her Partition, what should be said of the

violation of this same right after Poland freely rendered Christendom her great service at Vienna two centuries later?

Towards the close of the seventeenth century, Europe was on the point of being overrun by the Turks. The Turkish danger particularly hung over the German Empire under Leopold I. Insubordination of the minor states and dependencies, intrigues among the princes, competitions for the crown with their consequent civil strifes, were some of the conditions to weaken the German Empire shortly before the Turks besieged Vienna in 1683. Leopold I was sovereign of Austria and Emperor of Germany, and the nature of his governmental power varied with the many states he ruled. He held absolute power in some states, in others, merely nominal, which was hurtful to the centralization of power, and, naturally, weakened military efficiency. Another reason which would help the Turks to defeat Austria was the revolt of Hungary, with which Turkey hurriedly made common cause against their common foe. Leopold had merely a nominal power in Hungary. The Hungarians, jealous of their

self-government, guarded their laws and their customs with the utmost jealousy, and any non-compliance of the Emperor with the decisions and laws of their riotous diets, were enough to provoke insurrections. During the short respite that followed the war with France, Leopold determined to put an end to the trouble in Hungary. He marched an army into their country, to crush the Hungarian nobles with the utmost severity. He despoiled them of their time-honored national rights, instituted an unlimited despotism, and stationed there an army of thirty thousand troops to awe them into subjugation. Emeric Gekeli, who was the leader of the Hungarians, fled his country, and if Hannibal ever hated Rome, Gekeli hated Vienna. Hungary would not forgive Leopold his policy, and when the Turks approached Vienna with a powerful army in 1683, they naturally found in the Hungarians their warmest allies against their common enemy.

It is history that the Turks had always been a menace to the European civilization. They be-

came a terror to Christendom as early as the early part of the fifteenth century. Fanatics in chivalry, with Constantinople in their possession and Greece under their sway, they advanced as far as the present Bosnia and Bulgaria, and would, in the words of Abbott¹, "make all Europe tremble in view of their prowess, their ferocity and their apparently exhaustless legions." Up to the siege of Vienna, 1683, the Turks had not been defeated in a way not to be able to recover their prestige. A worthy type of the Huns under Attila, only better organized and therefore more dangerous, a worthy type of the Goths who sacked Rome, flushed with victories, fierce and semi-savage, enough civilized to know how to organize their forces so as to render more effective their wolf-like ferocity, the Turks poured forth countless numbers from Southern Europe, swept and carried everything before them, making Europe justly tremble for its civilization and its very life.

The Duke of Lorain set out to oppose them with 40,000 men. But the mere shadow of the Turk prompted him to save his army by a quick

¹ Austria, Its Rise and Present Power, p. 64.

retreat into the interior of Austria. The Emperor, no longer safe in his capital, left the city at night. Vienna was in despair. Europe trembled; civilization hung in the balance; for the handful of soldiers to oppose the Infidel, the dilapidated garrisons, the city reduced to the last extremity for want of provisions—all concerted to put the victory into the hands of the Turks.

Such was the danger that hung over Europe in 1683, and, but for Poland, she would have fallen under the Turkish yoke. "Save Christianity," Rome called out to Sobieski; "Save the Empire," pleaded the German Emperor. True to the traditions of his knightly forefathers, Sobieski merely answered: "It is our duty," and like another Washington at Princetown or Napoleon at Wagram, the Polish King led his indomitable horsemen to save the day for Europe.

No victory proved more decisive and fruitful of good results than the victory Sobieski won over the Turks in 1683. No torrent could have swept the army of the Grand Vizier as had Sobieski's veterans. With one hand, Sobieski cut the foe, never to rise; with the other, he bid

Europe rise from her terror. The Crescent has forever been darkened, whilst the Cross and the Double Eagle triumphed. Vienna rejoiced and kissed Sobieski's very cloak. The Cathedral, where the Christian Knight went to give thanks to God for his signal victory, trembled with the mighty song of thanksgiving. "Modern Europe owes Poland for the fact that it is not today either Turkish or Muscovite."¹ "But² for Polish valor, Western civilization would have been blighted—Christianity itself perhaps engulfed. Poland was the sentinel which kept watch on the Eastern gate of Europe, while Latin civilization, in the person of France, flowered and taught the world."

For her victories over the Turks Poland was called the "Bulwark of Christendom."

It was this Poland of which Talleyrand says: "The annihilation of Poland was worse than a crime; it was a folly." It was this Poland the great Napoleon called: "The Keystone to Eu-

¹ Parsons—History of the Polish Catholicity and The Russian "Orthodoxy."

² Van Norman—Poland the Knight Among Nations, p. 18.

rope." This Poland of which Maria Theresa of the very German Empire Poland saved from certain annihilation a century before, exclaimed after signing her Partition: "When I have been long dead the consequence of this violation of all that until now has been deemed holy and just will be experienced." Just as the patricians of ancient Rome were the defenders of the Roman people, so the Poles were the patricians of the Christian people in Western Europe. It was not without reason that Poland was called the hand-maid of Christian civilization. If there was a right well earned, it was the historical right of Poland. And if there ever were a right that was most ignominiously violated, it was again the historical right of Poland. But if, in the economy of justice, every violation of a right must be atoned for and satisfied, and because nations have only a temporal existence, and await no reward in the hereafter, then surely Poland's historical right cannot be long ignored. It is such convictions that strengthened the Poles in their hope of a future Poland, and made them ever sing: "Poland is not yet lost!"

CHAPTER III. POLAND'S HISTORICAL RIGHT (INTERNAL).

"It would be a genuine gain for civilization and permanent peace if there could be constituted a Polish Kingdom, including Poles of Poland (Russia) as well as Austria and Germany."

—Frank H. Simonds—Review of Reviews.

The history of Poland exhibits characteristics that could serve as the best offsets to militarism and those state policies the world determined to crush today. Poland was non-aggressive and tolerant. An offensive warfare was contrary to her constitution, and all the wars Poland waged were of a defensive nature. Poland never made war to acquire a neighbor's territory, to gain political pre-eminence, and to impose her law upon the world. To Poland fled all persecuted peoples; for there was more religious toleration than in the rest of Europe. The Poles never forgot to make their King, before the election, swear that he would tolerate all sects within the king-

dom. "If you will not take the oath," said the Marshal to Henry of Valois, "you will not rule." From France, wandered Huguenots; from Spain, came the victims of the inquisitions; Pilgrims journeyed from Britain. In Poland Jew and Gentile worshiped in peace.

The political policy of Poland stands in a rigid independence of the Prussian policy. In the light of the Prussian Political doctrines, where the state is considered supreme to religion, and to national traditions, where people are suppressed, persecuted, expropriated and ousted from their very homesteads, for the one end of the deified state, Poland's historical non-aggressiveness and tolerance have no meaning. Prussia wages wars to acquire territories and to assume political power. "Germany," recently said a high German official, "could only dispose of her Polish possession if she took possession of Belgium, and incorporated that country into the German Empire," forgetting that the national rights of the Belgians are anterior to the aggression of Germany. Why did Poland not make use of chances she had in her hands to acquire territories, to subdue peoples

and try to metamorphose their very national character? Why did the Poles not attempt to forcibly assimilate smaller nationalities, to incorporate them into their own race, to blot out their nationality, to exterminate them, to "Ausrotten" them? Did they, better than their oppressors, understand the futility of interfering with God's very plan that each nation should live a separate life, that the character of a race cannot be eradicated without an almost total disappearance of the people? Poland had them in her power. Sobieski could remain passive when the Turks threatened Vienna, even make common cause with them, the way Germany did today, and seize territories on the plea of "progressive politics." The answer is simple: Poland was pre-eminently a Catholic democracy. Her religion entered into the nature of her constitution, and she scrupulously adhered to the principle of Christian morality: "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's."

Parsons has well said: "In that devoted land (Poland) the names of Catholicism and country invoke each other," and "religion and patriotism

are synonymous terms with the Polish.” And Van Norman: “Religion¹ and patriotism are so closely identified with the Poles that it is difficult to separate them, and the connection had its origin in historic and geographical reasons.” There is no other country perhaps where religion entered into the government and became its guiding spirit in the way it did in Poland. Whether in regard to internal relation, or external negotiations, the state had never infringed on the rights of the church. It was but fit that from her inception Poland should be designated with the rare epithet of ‘Most Orthodox.’ When in the beginning of the thirteenth century, various political factions arose in Poland, consequent upon the unhappy territorial apportionment among her various princes, the Church constituted the centralizing factor, the center of gravity, to keep Poland united. The subsequent reunion of the various principalities into one kingdom, was principally brought about by the Polish clergy. Tartar incursions could devastate the country, floods and pestilence could impoverish and thin the

¹ Poland the Knight Among Nations.

population, but religion would prove to the Pole the mainstay against disintegration. The Church in Poland wielded the most constructive influence on learning and civilization. Ecclesiastics held high offices in the state. One of the Kings of Poland, John Casimir, had been Cardinal prior to his coronation as king of Poland. "The Chief of the Senate," says Moltke¹, "was the incumbent Archbishop of Gnesen, as Primate of the Kingdom, the first in rank after the King, and even he himself was King during an interregnum, on which account he was also called interrex." The battle-hymn of the Polish Knights was the inspiring canticle: "Boga Rodzico Dziewico."

"To mention one of the many customs," says Parsons, "which show how the Catholic spirit was identified with Polish patriotism; at the reading of the Gospel every noble drew his sword halfway out of his scabbard, in sign of his sworn devotion to the faith, even unto death." Henry the Pious sacrificed his life with his 10,000 knights on the fields of Liegnitz chiefly for the sake of Christianity. The impelling motive which led

¹ Account of Affairs and of the Social Conditions in Poland.

Poland to unite herself to Lithuania was first to convert her to faith—to propagate Christianity, and to strengthen herself as a barrier against the Asiatic hordes that threatened Christianity. Sobieski hurried with his hussars to save Vienna against the Turks, not for his sake or the sake of his country, but purely for the sake of Christendom..

Naturally the religious spirit in Poland proved the firmest antecedent to the strong faith of the Polish, when all the persecutions of Nero, under Catharine of Russia, under Nicholas I, and Alexander II, and all the machinations of Bismarck availed naught, and exerted a wholesome influence on the political development of the country. It was but natural that Poland's practical Catholicity should keep her immune from military aggressiveness, and from religious and political oppression of peoples who lived within her territories. The generosity Poland extended to all peoples was in keeping with her constitution. It were impossible for Poland, the Champion of Christianity, to rule over Lithuania with the mailed fist of the Prussians, to make her tradi-

tions and national life subservient to the good of the state. It was natural for Poland to allow the Lithuanians, no less than the Ruthenians and other people, autonomy and freedom of conscience, pay honor and respect to their national customs and their traditions. Catholic Poland, which repeatedly saved Europe against the invasions of the yellow race of Asia, could not listen to the overtures the Turks made to her, not to interfere with their devastating advance upon Vienna. She could not think of allowing the Turks to overrun the German empire, weaken it beyond recovery and thereby gain political and territorial ascendency over it. A policy of this nature were diametrically opposed to Poland's national principles, and its very idea Poland would scorn outright. In ascendency over the Russians, Poland left them to themselves. When Prussia lay in her power, Poland would not think of usurping her possessions, of denationalizing the Prussians, and expropriating them of their land and their sacred birthright to freedom.

For this reason Poland was called the Greatest Democracy in her time. She was safe against

proving an invader; against carrying on aggressive wars to conquer and subdue nations, and rob them of their territory. It was because Poland acted on such principles that her wars were not of an offensive but merely defensive character, that during almost all her existence as a nation, Poland remained scrupulously honest to herself and to her neighbors; that since her final struggle during the tenth and eleventh centuries to emerge into history at last a united nation, she never made war that she might acquire a neighbor's territory, or crush his national spirit. Her only desire was to live and let live, to preserve her unity, and to fulfill such duty as she had, by accident or birth, toward her faith, her traditions and her share of Western culture; that, like another United States, Poland was very tolerant, and in the words of Moltke: "was for a time justly called the promised land of the Jews."

In the early republic of Poland, there breathed forth a love of freedom and toleration; righteousness and justice. Such had been the moral magnitude of Poland, which historical right had been wantonly violated towards the end of the eight-

eenth century—a right which Poland justly claims today. It is when writers at the present consider the placating influence a mid-European Poland would needs exert on the warring nations, that they speak of her as “the political equilibrium of Europe,” “the buffer state between Russia, Germany and Austria,” “the solution to the weightiest problems of modern Europe,” and exclaim: “who dares dispute that the national resurrection of Poland will contribute to re-establish the political tranquility and equilibrium of Europe upon a solid basis,” while her suppression they call with Brownson: “The greatest crime as well as political blunder.”

Poland's partition is justly styled the Greatest Crime of the Ages and an unprecedented violation of a people's right! While on the one hand, the usurpers of Poland's rights could show no reason, or pretext that would at least palliate their highway robbery, on the other, the Poles have repeatedly manifested that they never relinquished their historical claim to independence and self-government.

“While¹ the principal neutral Powers alike deserters of the rights and nations and betrayers of the liberties of Europe, saw the crime consummated without stretching forth an arm to prevent it,” Polish statesmen established a constitution of whom the same writer says: “History will one day do justice to that illustrious body and hold out to posterity, as the perfect model of a most arduous reformation which fell to the ground from no want of wisdom on their part, but from the irresistible power and detestable wickedness of their enemies.”

There were no other people to more strongly resent the violation of their God-given rights than were the Poles. Whether by peaceful measures during the years of the Partition, whether by armed uprisings after the Partition, whether by preserving her nationality intact and her racial character pure, whether by showing an intellectual capacity and moral soundness, a highly developed patriotism and love of freedom, Poland has forcibly shown that never has she relinquished her honorable and nobly earned historical right to self-government, and that at no time

¹ Sir James MacKintosh—An Account of the Partitions of Poland—Edinburgh Review, Vol. XXXVII.

has she considered it an entity separate and separable from the nation.

While the Partitions were in progress, a Diet assembled at Warsaw in 1788 to establish a new constitution, both to better internal affairs and to offer a protest against the armed interference with the national integrity of Poland. Never had a body of reformers distinguished themselves for greater wisdom, competence and prudence. While we yet have to learn of a representative assembly invested with an authority more direct, deliberate, formal and complete, representing practically all the freemen, assembled with a view to reforming the government, we likewise have yet to hear a stronger resentment, a firmer vindication of an historical right than the declaration of Poland's national assembly, which scored Russia's false guarantees of 1776 as "null, an invasion of national independence, incompatible with the natural rights of every civilized society, and with the political privileges of every nation!"

When these measures have failed and after the great Powers of Europe saw the crime consummated without stretching forth an arm to prevent

it, Poland, rather than abjure her national right, strove to regain it by violent means; for it today Nevin O. Winter¹ could rightly say: "Poles have never forgotten the old Kingdom. They never cease to sigh for their lost independence. The bleeding heart is very much in evidence throughout all of Old Poland," that same feeling was a hundred times stronger, the sighs for their lost independence much deeper, their national wounds were more readily opened anew, their historical pride, too recent and too much humiliated not to provoke resentment immediately after the Partitions.

The Polish insurrections, though they failed to bring back freedom to the Poles, served as continued protests against the dismemberment of Poland. Limmerick and Athlone failed to bring freedom to the Irish, but they were fruitful of results on the score of their national self-assertion. Holland and Belgium made the same truth clear in 1848. The reprisals of the nationalistic Hungarians were no less a protest against their oppression than a vindication of their rights to

¹ *Poland of Today and Yesterday.*

an autonomous government. America could not better show and defend her right to independence than by fighting the War of Independence. The insurrections the Poles started to regain their freedom and independence and to allay their acute persecutions and violations of their natural rights and tradition-honored customs were proof that Poland had never relinquished her right to self-government.

Yet stronger than the re-establishment of the Polish Constitution, and stronger than their lawful uprisings in vindication of their undying right to self-government, has been the indestructible national and religious character of the Poles. They were created Polish and were to stay Polish. They would not become Russian, for they were not made to become Russian. They would not become Prussian; their national soul and the soul of Prussia are as much opposed as is fire to water. Thebaud¹ has well said that the character of the race once established, cannot be

¹ Ireland Past and Present.

eradicated without an almost total disappearance of the people. This is classically true of the Poles. Although Catherine's Imperial injunction: "We¹ order that this invasion (when she despatched her Cossacks into Poland in 1768) destroy forever their name and race," although Prussia's theory "Ausrotten" the Poles has received sanction in the attempted banishment of the Polish language, in the curtailment of religion and patriotism, the Polish nationality has remained unimpaired. The Poles had the most encouraging sentiments expressed about them by Americans who made a study of Poland. "If Poland is dead as a political entity," says Nevin O. Winter², "she is very much alive in every other way. The ancient fire still burns in her poets and authors, and the bookstalls are crowded with their productions. This life manifests itself in her arts and crafts which astonish the beholder of their artistic merit," though he tells us that "Prussia spared no effort to Germanize the Polish province from the beginning of her sovereignty, and the original Prussia has become

¹ Parsons, History of the Polish Catholicity and the Russian "Orthodoxy."

² Poland of Today and Yesterday.

the modern Germany," and: "The ambition of Germany is boundless and the unfortunate Poles have been caught in this maelstrom." "Walk the streets of these cities," says Van Norman¹, "tramp through the country districts of these same provinces and you will find that the people are Slavonic in characteristics and in speech even that there is only a very thin veneer of official Germanization. To the world which sees only the map, it is Posen, Danzig, Breslau, Crakau, Lemberg. Actually to the people who live in these places or who do business in them, it is Poznan, Gdansk, Wroclaw, Krakow and Lwow, as it was when Poland was at the height of her power." Today the sons of Henry the Pious, Casimir the Great, of Sobieski the Mighty and Kosciuszko the Free, more than ever claim their nobly earned historical right of self-government.

Surely, "The Partition² of Poland was worse than a Crime; it was a folly." And if historic principles such as those of nationality do not stop in their actions until they have done their work, the present attitude of the world, voting for the restitution of freedom to Poland, is a

¹ Poland the Knight Among Nations.

² Talleyrand.

clear manifestation of just such principles.

In the last analysis there is justice in history and it is but natural that even Liebnecht, the German socialistic leader should assert: "Reconstruct Poland, and you (Germany) shall have peace as far as Russia is concerned. Until you have done this, you cannot expect peace and security," and that President Wilson should speak the inspiring words: "Statesmen¹ everywhere are agreed that there should be a united, independent and autonomous Poland."

¹ Message to the Senate, January 22, 1917.

CHAPTER IV. POLAND'S INTELLECTUAL RIGHT (ANCIENT).

“She—Cracow, Poland—developed, cultured and civilized long before the three headed dragon appeared, and she was weary of waiting for her rather uncouth neighbors to catch up with her intellectually, socially and in almost all other arts of civilization—the politer arts.”

—Van Norman—*Poland the Knight Among Nations*, p. 54.

“Poland of the Seventeenth Century was the most civilized country in Europe.”

—Moltke—*Account of Affairs and of the Social Conditions in Poland*.

The Poles have ever displayed qualities of an intellectual race, and this fact forms today one of the grounds on which they base their claim to freedom and self-government. Intellectually, the Poles are no less qualified to self-government

than any other self-governing people. They had been a free and autonomous people for nine centuries. They acknowledged no foreign rule, and made their own laws. Their ability to self-govern had not been questioned prior to the Partitions. The Poles had ever cherished a republican government which reached its highest expression in the Constitution of the Third of May, 1791. This constitution was an embodiment of their political efficiency. The leading statesmen of that time considered it the very perfection of political competency. The prominent English statesman Edmund Burke, proclaimed the Polish Constitution the best in Europe.

Republicanism spells political advancement; it denotes intellectual progress; it bespeaks a higher degree of civilization. A republican government has ever betokened a higher intellectual plane of the people possessing it. A republic belongs to the people. A republican people take an active interest in the government. This they cannot do without having reached a certain mark in intellectual progress. A republic supposes

civilization. "As despotism," says Moltke,¹ "is the only form of government for barbarians, so republicanism is the only form of government for people highly civilized, for it connotes activity of the people in the government and capability which follows education."

Poland was a republic when other nations were rigid monarchies. Poland had a relatively perfect system of national representation which was in conformity with her advanced political development. Poland had a Senate and a House of Representatives, as early as the latter part of the Fourteenth century. She had her minor diets where representatives were chosen. Already at that early period the Polish government presented the closest prototype of the American government. It were inconsistent to charge Poland with intellectual inability and admit her institutions which suppose high civilization. In the time of the Partitions Poland effected a political reform which astonished the world for its vigorous intellectuality.

Poland has not only given birth to individuals such as won enviable fame in every department

¹ Account of Affairs and of the Social Conditions of Poland.

of science, and have proven constructive builders of civilization, but even during the time of her Partitions, instituted the commission of education, the first of its kind in Europe. These were no ordinary marks by which Poland displayed her intellectual strength. The intellectual vitality of the Poles, however, is classically brought out in their life after the Partitions. To successfully resist such denationalization measures as the Poles have resisted chiefly through their spiritual and intellectual vigor, to create a literature such as they have created after the fall of their country, and when the enemy had taken every measure to destroy them, to give birth, in their crucial hour, to the world's foremost geniuses of the age —was to show their intellectual vigor and their right to self-government—it was to display their vitality which shall ever keep them immune from destruction from without.

Had Poland occupied the territory France, Spain or Southern German occupy, she would have contributed to the early civilization not less than did they. Poland, however, had the misfortune to be too far away from the center of civili-

zation and too near the Eastern barbarians who made constant irruptions into Poland, and who naturally made the Poles devote their time to warfare rather than to intellectual pursuits. To-day's civilization is the ancient civilization of Greece and Rome, Christianized by the Church. Rome was its center. Naturally people who were nearer its center, or people over whom the Roman dominion had once extended and naturally left its imprint of higher civilization, received it sooner than those who were farther removed from it. Italy, Southern Germany, France and Spain were the first beneficiaries of that civilization which only at a later period was to embrace Poland, and still later, Northern Germany, Prussia and Lithuania. Poland was not only too far from the center of the Roman, but likewise the Byzantine, civilization which had never reached Poland.

While other countries, then, had developed powerful organizations, while Germany produced the immortal personage Charlemagne, and was the fortunate recipient of the full benefit which resulted from the civilization he gave, Poland

was still a country where legends were told and primitive civilization obtained.

The open boundaries of Poland brought many a hurt and national misfortune to the Poles. Poland was left unprotected by nature. Her boundaries offered no natural barrier to hinder the enemy from invading and ravaging the country. Poland's geographical situation was extremely hurtful to her civilization. No other country was so exposed to the Huns and the Tartars, the Turks and the Muscovites, as was Poland. Self-preservation was the all-important question of the Poles particularly from the ninth up to the sixteenth century. Education and learning which admirably developed at a later period, were for a long time constantly interfered with by the ceaseless incursions of the Asiatic hordes. It is known that Poland took no part in the Crusades as she had her crusades right at her Eastern door. She had to stay at home to keep back the barbarous East from invading the West, while Western Knighthood battled for the Holy Land. "Europe forgetful, heedless," says Michelet, "no more appears to know the supreme danger which

threatened it in the last decades of the Middle Ages and from which it was saved."

No justice can be done to the early intellectual progress of Poland without recalling her territorial position, which had been altogether ungenial to the cultivation of letters. Poland appeared late as a nation, and the Poles were too much taken up with defensive wars to have any great leisure to devote themselves to writing. "When Europe," says Michelet, "chattered idly, disputed over Indulgences, lost itself in subtleties, these heroic guardians were protecting it with lances. In order that the women of France and Germany might peacefully spin their distaff and their men study their theology, the Poles, keeping sentry, only a step from the barbarians, were on the watch, saber in hand. If perchance they fell asleep, their bodies would remain at the post, their heads would go to the Turkish camp." "Poland," says Marius Ary Leblong, "at all times had to be maintained in arms while others had plenty of leisure for development; through historic necessity she remained well after the Middle Ages a chivalrous nation of Knight-errants who

so valiantly kept watch in the face of Eastern anti-christian barbarians that she could, in a noble presumption, command the respect of Europe, as she guarded the individualism of her heroic warriors." To ward off the East from the West was Poland's principal mission, and she faithfully fulfilled it at the expense of her intellectual progress. When Dr. James J. Walsh in his "Thirteenth,¹ Greatest of Centuries," says: "Casimir, besides giving laws to his people, also founded a university for them and in every way encouraged the development of such progress as would make his subjects intelligently realize their own rights and maintain them, apparently foreseeing that thus the King would be better able to strengthen himself against the enemies that surrounded him in Central Europe," he outlined both the early intellectual endeavors of Poland, and the adverse circumstances under which that country labored from the very start.

Still, Poland did her share. While England had her Oxford; while France astounded the world with her Paris, Poland already possessed her Cracow. "The Poles," says Van Norman,²

¹ Chapter XXIII—Justice and Legal Developments.

² Poland the Knight Among Nations.

"owe the career and great achievements of many of their foremost men to the venerable Jagiellonian University. One of its graduates, the most illustrious in half of a thousand years, belongs to the world." "Poland has developed, cultured and civilized long before the three-headed dragon appeared, and she was weary of waiting for her rather uncouth neighbors to catch up with her intellectually, socially and in almost all the other arts of civilization—the politer arts," and finally: "It was the University of Cracow that meant to Central Europe what Paris meant to France and Oxford to England. At that time there were but a few universities in Europe, and it was the University of Cracow that ever since its foundation by Casimir the Great in 1364 proved to be the main nursery of intellectual outgrowth and inspiration in that part of Europe."

In the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries, despite her geographical drawbacks, Poland displays an intellectual progress that is relatively conspicuous. As far back as the Twelfth century, Poland possessed well regulated

schools attached to her many churches and Cathedrals. Many of them became famous. They were generally maintained by the Church. At that period Poland fostered learning by establishing schools and founding the University. She gave birth, in the Thirteenth century, to men like Gallus and Martinus Polonus. They were the first representatives of the Polish literature, who rose to high prominence in the then world of letters. Martius Polonus' chronicle of the Popes and Emperors, was considered a famous book, and was extensively printed three hundred years after it had been first published. A noted leterateur was Vincent Kadlubek, Bishop of Czarnkow and Archbishop of Gnesen, who won fame for his political writings. Others became famous for their literary achievements, as Dlugosz, the celebrated historian and John Ostrorog, who achieved remarkable success in political science. Another was Zbigniew Olesnicki. He was a scholar by excellence. Versed in political science, he was a leading statesman. A master of literature, he raised the standard of Polish learning and left his influence upon the literature of Europe. He

brought to Poland works of ancient authors, invited noted professors to the University and encouraged education in a thitherto unprecedented way.

The Sixteenth century was a century of scientific movements. It produced the greatest scientists. Nearly every leading nation claims one or few eminent scholars in that movement. Poland did her best keeping abreast with every constructive movement that was set on foot in Europe. While other countries laid claim to such men as Galileo, Kepler, Boyle and Newton, Poland produced her Copernicus, the astronomer by excellence.

It was this noted astronomical reformer who definitely placed the earth among the solar planets, and who by his celebrated work, "De Orbium Coelestium Revolutionibus," revolutionized the whole science of astronomy by building a new and solid foundation for modern astronomical studies upon which they firmly rest today. Copernicus was a native of Poland; Brudzewski, his professor, and the University of Cracow, his Alma Mater. Copernicus was the most illus-

trious, but not the only representative of mathematics and astronomy in Poland at the epoch of the Humanities. Had Poland no other scholar but Copernicus, no other institution of learning than the University of Cracow, she would be entitled to be counted with the intellectual nations in the world. Poland could well afford to discard all her scholars of the Sixteenth and every other century but Copernicus, and present him to the world as an exponent of her culture and learning.

The Reformation produced in Poland, as in other countries, many noted ecclesiastical writers and controversialists. The best known among them were Wujek, the translator of the Bible into the Polish, Kromer and Hosius who became famous both for his work: "Confessions of Christian Faith" and because he was chosen to preside at the Council of Trent. At this time, too, flourished the great Polish Jesuit Skarga, the champion of Polish patriotism and literature.

The Polish literature and civilization of the Sixteenth century, developed under a four-fold impetus. The political movement of the early development of the Polish democracy; the scien-

tific movement; the Reformation, and, particularly, Humanism of which Poland became a virile and resourceful participant. The Nation of Mickiewicz and Sienkiewicz kept abreast with other nations despite geographical disadvantages, along the line of intellectual progress. The success it achieved in the time of the humanistic movement bore evidence of an enlightened people, no less so than did similar success, the neighboring nations achieved, manifest their intellectual aptness.

The University of Cracow had already for a length of time attracted students from foreign lands and possessed such noted theologians as John Kenty, Nicholas of Blonia, Boner, and such philosophers as John of Glogow; lawyers, such as John Edogt, Benedict Hesse, and astronomers such as Adalbert of Brudzewo and Copernicus. But it was not until the age of the humanities that it rose to an international prominence. Professors from foreign countries considered it an honor to occupy seats at the Polish University, where they found an untrammeled field for literary activity. It appeared that the University

developed a surplus educational prosperity, which it had to give an outlet to by disfussing it in minor schools and colleges. Secondary schools, each possessing a respectable faculty, were founded in large numbers. In many cases, competent professors from Cracow were assigned seats in the colleges and minor institutions of learning.

Humanism found in Poland a fertile substratum of intellectuality and produced a rich literary progress. It tested the intellectual power of the Poles and found it resourceful and responsive. Budny and Krowiecki, Rey, the noted prosewriter, and Bielski, the master of didactic poems and satires are telling exponents of the litreary progress of the Poles at this time. In political science Cornecki, perhaps, became the most prominent. It was in the age of Humanities, too, that Poland boasted of her renowned Kochanowski, only surpassed by Mickiewicz, whom the celebrated Goethe called "The Poet-Laureate of the world." This was the golden age of Poland's intellectual reassertion. It was when the intellectual renaissance held sway in Europe that

Poland merited her intellectual franchise which stood proof against the denationalization measures that were enforced against her after the Partitions and which today justly demands the restoration of her right to self-government.

CHAPTER V.

POLAND'S INTELLECTUAL RIGHT (MODERN).

"What have the Poles ever done? It was a Pole, Nikolaus Copernicus who first taught that the sun was the center of the solar system, and thus founded modern astronomy. It was John Sobieski, another Pole, who defeated the Turks at Vienna, and by that victory stopped an invasion of the followers of Mohammed, which threatened to overrun all Europe. Thaddeus Kosciuszko, a native of Poland, enlisted with the American forces under Washington and proved one of his most effective helpers. He was given a vote of thanks by Congress after the Revolutionary War was over and returned to his own troubled country to help fight her battles. Other Poles in later years have likewise achieved distinction. Helen Modjeska, the eminent tragedienne, was of Polish birth; Henry Sienkiewicz, the author of "Quo Vadis," is one of the same nationality as is Pader-

ewski, the eminent pianist and composer. Many other famous writers and musical composers, both old and modern, have been Polish by birth. The Poles really had something to boast of as well as the Anglo Saxon."

—Nevin O. Winter—Poland of Today and Yesterday, p. 2.

Russia, Prussia and Austria in their sorry attempt to justify their crime of dividing Poland, proclaimed to the world that Poland fell of her own weakness. The world might have been deceived by this Machiavelian lie, had not the phenomenal intellectual assertion of the Poles after the Partitions told a different story. After the dismemberment of their country, the Poles have shown an intellectual vigor to surprise the world. "In spite of the difficulties under which the Polish literature labors owing to a dismembered country, the amount of it that appears is very large. There are four active centers. Cracow, Lemberg, Warsaw and Posen. Many editions of old and most forgotten Polish authors, are being issued under the patronage of the University of Cracow. A number of excellent reviews, fully

up to the English and German standards, are issued.”¹

Van Norman² presents the Polish intellectual life from another viewpoint. “In industry, in agriculture, in the arts and sciences, in education, in wealth and numbers, the Poles are progressing. It is impossible to kill a people that has a will to live. The commercial spirit has touched them and they have adapted themselves to it as one more weapon wherewith to preserve their sense of national unity and improve their condition and prospects. A strong middle class is developing among them. Today, the young and well-educated generation of Poles have largely replaced Jews and Germans. Polish merchants, bankers, shopkeepers, mechanics, artisans, physicians, lawyers and engineers are now in the majority. In the words of a famous Polish historian: ‘In 1800 we prayed to be allowed to live. In 1900 we know that we shall live.’”

Poland’s division and apportionment among her neighbors was a historical event without an

¹ Nevin O. Winter—Poland of Today and Yesterday, p. 137.

² Poland the Knight Among Nations, p. 27.

antecedent. It aroused a world-wide interest. Statesmen, historians and essayists spent much time and energy explaining the causes that led to so unique a historical event as was the downfall of Poland. What strikes one, however, is the fact that from no source came the accusation that Poland's fate was the result of an intellectual incompetency of the Poles regarding the administration of state. Those who tried to justify the Partitions of Poland, would not forego quoting it in support of their contention. But they could not deny a fact the entire world knew of. They could not trace the downfall of Poland to intellectual stagnancy at a time when the Four Years' Diet framed the Constitution of the Third of May, 1791, when Poland achieved a political reform that has in relation to time and circumstances never been achieved by any nation, when her constitution was awarded the full endorsement of the leading statesmen of the time for its high political genius and practicalness. Men like the Potockis, Adam Czartoryski, Malachowski and others, who framed the constitution of the Third of May, were recognized statesmen. They

were classical exponents of Polish patriotism, statesmanship and education.

Poland at the time of the Partitions was a true political body. Her subjects enjoyed legal and social equality. Then, no less than centuries before, Poland showed every evidence of an enviable culture, of strong literary and political efforts and of a deep conviction to patriotic duty.

The strength of a nation is best gauged by the obstacles it overcomes in struggling for existence. This is eminently true of the Polish nation which was given the severest test and found not wanting. Both during and after the Partitions Poland showed a steady intellectual progress, and in recent time, under the very torrent of anti-Polish measures, Poland has every reason to claim an intellectual standard that is on a par with that of any other people. Under the depression of the first Partitions, the Poles made the noblest attempt at a radical reform. They soon instituted the commission of education, which had its distinction of being the first of its kind in Europe. The government took education

into its hands. This, too, was an advanced measure, as it was only later that other countries copied it from Poland. The commission was headed by such men as Poniatowski, Czartoryski, Zamojski and Potocki. Some of them became later the authors of the Polish Constitution. It created wholesome influence on education not only in Poland, but in Europe at large. It established a public school system, and thanks to its untiring activity, the Universities of Cracow, Wilna and others were given that educational impetus that justly gained for them the merit of true centers of learning. High schools sprung up in the larger towns and elementary schools were built in large numbers. The military schools at Warsaw became renowned. The Commission prepared the Polish mind for the framing of the Constitution of the Third of May, which to this day remains a monument to Polish statesmanship. Even in peaceful time, the commission of education would constitute the finest example of the intellectual vigor of the Poles. But it must be remembered that they found themselves equal of its establishment in the very turmoil of politi-

cal disquiet, and all the intriguery the Prussian and Russian autocrats were capable of.

With the consummation of the Third Partition, Poland ceased to exist as a political entity. Yet it was after the Partitions that the Polish nation produced a marvelous growth of literature, asserting thereby to the world that it had not ceased to be a nation. It clearly demonstrated that intellectual deficiency could never be laid to the Poles as a cause that contributed to their downfall. It rather showed that in due time it would prove an irrefutable argument in favor of the restoration of their freedom and their right to self-government. The intellectual reassertion of the Poles after they had been reduced to political slavery was not short-lived, or such as denotes a spontaneous outburst, and subsides after a time. It had continued in the face of the most repressive anti-Polish measures, as a stigma to the usurper and a protest against the unreasonableness of the Polish subjection.

The Poles clearly realized the power of education as an offset to national annihilation. The commission of education did laudable work. The

reformation of schools, starting from the Academy of Cracow down to the last elementary village school, wrought a constructive influence upon the literary activity of the Poles at this time. The political reform produced learned volumes of political discussion. This was an ill-boding period in the political life of Poland, but an encouraging period in her literature. Poland had reached a golden period of intellectual progress rather than stood at the brink of a political crisis. A nation which is able to produce the very flower of poets and writers, under such political conditions as were those of Poland under foreign rule, can hardly be charged with intellectual deficiency. The institution of the Society of Friends of learning in Warsaw; the opening of the new university of Warsaw, the University of Lwow, the Volhynian Lyceum and numerous minor institutions of learning were some of the sources that disseminated knowledge in Poland shortly after the Partitions. Many of them became famous and their influence is felt to this day. They were represented by such men as Niemcewicz, a friend of Kosciuszko and a sojourner in America for

many years, and known for his success in imitating Scott and Byron; Morawski, who translated Byron; Kozmian, Linde and Mickiewicz, the greatest Polish poet, Lelewel, who achieved notable fame as historian.

Poland became a vigorous participant in the Romantic movement that appeared in Europe shortly after the Partitions. Mickiewicz was the chief exponent of the Polish Romanticism. From his time on the Polish literature struck a purely national key. At this time, Poland apparently developed a surplus literary energy and gave birth to her three great poets: Mickiewicz, Slowacki and Krasinski. They were not ordinary talents, but literary geniuses with international repute. They were noble and rare exponents of Polish culture. Mickiewicz especially, who is not unfitly called the Polish Goethe, deserves special comment. His celebrated sonnets and his *Wal- lenrod*, exhibit the unusual versatility of mind which characterizes this the greatest Polish poet. His "Pan Tadeusz," a national epic, is a recognized masterpiece. The chair he held at the University of Paris brought enviable credit to the Polish culture.

The Polish literature reached the height of perfection even while the country suffered the most abject slavery. Rome produced the flower of her literature while in political prosperity. Spain and England gave birth to their greatest literature while their political conditions were at their best. But Poland gave utterance to her great Romantic song in the turmoil of political adversity. The age of the Romantic movement in Poland needs not feel ashamed at the age of the Humanities. The Polish literature and the Polish intellectual development has made a tremendous headway for the last century and more. What appeared to be insurmountable difficulties the enemy endeavored to place in its way, have failed to arrest its growth. A chance review of the Polish philosophy, poetry, music and art, in recent years, bring to mind such names as Ignace J. Paderewski, Henry Sienkiewicz, Helen Mojeska, Sembrich-Kochanska, Curie-Skłodowska, the first woman to occupy a chair at the Sorbonne; Wyspianski, Kasprovicz, Konopnicka, B. Prus, Reymont, Lutoslawski, A. Brueckner, Fathers Pawlicki and Morawski, Askenazy,

Struve, Libelt, Trentkowski, Lelewel, Klaczko, Korzon, Golochnowski and Badeni. Fr. Pawlicki's "History of Greek Literature" is considered a classic of an eminent type. Odyniec won a name for his translations of Scott, Moore and Byron. Kasprowicz was a noted Shakespearean translator.

Every literature has a note of national individuality and the Polish literature of the Post-Partitional period possesses a character which is vainly sought in any other literature. It is the note of spirituality, or idealism, which is peculiar especially to the Polish poetry of this time. After the Partitions the Poles lived an ideal existence, which depended on her poets to a degree unprecedented in any history save that of the ancient Greece. The Polish poets taught the people their history, aims and ideals that could be learned in no other way under the iron rule of the usurpers. The Poles have never parted with the idea that they have ceased to be a nation. They have considered the period after the partition as a mere suspense in their political life. They remained firm in their belief that it

would not be long before they regain their freedom and independence. For this kind of political philosophy the Polish poets are principally to be thanked. They inspired the nation with new courage and perseverance. They instilled into the people their sacred right of being and self-explicitation. They endeavored to explain the working of Providence. They strove to prepare the nation to pass bravely their *Via Dolorosa*. They taught that the Poles had yet a mission to perform, and that Providence tried them in preparation to its fulfillment.

"Great as is the literature of Poland from an artistic point of view, it stands on another place than that of literary value alone. In the first half of the Nineteenth century, the Polish poets rose as the national teachers and moral leaders. They spoke to the people held in bondage by the bitterest facts of life, of the hope that would save them. The youths of Poland were prohibited from learning their nation's history, her spirit, her aims in the ordinary channels. They learnt them, therefore, of the poets who taught them the lessons of devotion and self-immolation for a na-

tive country; whose writings kept alive the fires of patriotism, the Polish ideality and moral health, in young souls beset by peril. The national literature was no mere art, an element disconnected with the deep things of life, written for recreation or relaxation. It spoke straight to a stern purpose. It was a weapon, and as powerful a weapon as any that she could have chosen, in the cause of Poland. In this light the Polish poets regarded the poetry they gave their people. The literature they brought forth is, said Mickiewicz, speaking in the College of France, ‘above all things true. Each work is at the same time an action.’¹ “Poland’s poets were more than her poets. They were her patriots.”² It was, then, to give the nation spiritual nourishment which would tend to compensate for the loss of their political independence that this kind of poetry was created. It may have been too idealistic and of little use to the actual restoration of freedom to Poland. But it manifested the versatility of the Polish mind, the depth of the Polish

¹ Adam Mickiewicz *Les Slaves*.

² Monica M. Gardner—Poland, p. 32.

soul, and the strength of the Polish hope—it showed the native intellectuality of the Polish race. “This period of the Polish nation rent with struggle as regards her political nation brought forth not only Adam Mickiewicz, the greatest of Polish poets, but so noble a band of singers inspired by sorrow, as to be justly reckoned the Golden Age of Poland’s literature”; and “Mesyaism inspired the Polish nation with a literature which for artistic beauty, passionate religious feeling and deep pathetic power ranks with the finest production of European letters.”¹

In more recent years, the Main School and the “Macierz” the Poles under Russia founded, shows how anxious they were to seize every opportunity to acquire education. The Main School did not exist long, as the Russian government took care to suppress it very early.

In 1905, during the short spell of freedom Russia allowed the Poles, the latter set on foot a sweeping educational movement under the auspices of the “Polish Macierz.” It existed only two years when the Russian government sup-

¹ Monica M. Gardner—American Catholic Quarterly Review, Vol. XXXI, No. 121.

pressed it. The extent and the ability with which it was managed are evident from the result it attained in that short space of time. According to Russian reports, the committees that worked in the interest of the Macierz, reached the number of more than 700. They had a membership of 12,000. Polish schools under the Macierz numbered 630,000 Polish children. But, unfortunately, the Prussian influence in the court of the Czars, which has been brought to light during the war, prevailed upon the dupish Russian government to put a stop to its noble work.

What would Poland's contribution to knowledge be, under normal conditions, can be appreciated from the way the Polish mind expressed itself in Poland under Austria. With their schools practically suppressed under Russia, and with the ban the German government put on the use of the Polish in schools and assemblies, Cracow and Lemberg, under the more lenient Austrian rule, became the main centers of the Polish literary activity. There the Polish intellectual life came compellingly to the fore in all its phases

Popular education was advanced under the auspices of the universities. Scientific research resulted in the contribution of many volumes of useful and practical knowledge, while the literary and artistic life developed in a way to compel the favorable attention of the world. Polish schools in Galicia, free from the ban of the Prussian and Russian type, turned out fruitful sources to supply the fund of human knowledge. Works of old masters and standard Reviews were edited with the best results. Book-shelves in the public libraries became heavy with books by Polish authors.

The Polish administration of Galicia and the access Poles had to governmental positions in the Austrian Empire, gave them a chance to exercise their political skill as they were not able to do in Russia and Germany, where they had every official position closed against them. Such men as Goluchowski and Badeni rose to the highest positions in the Imperial cabinet, while Dunajewski reorganized the finances of the Austrian Empire.

The Poles carried, along with their traditions, the intellectual aptness that characterized their forefathers. Wherever they would settle, their intellectual life would soon create an impression. This is especially true of the Poles in America, both because here they settled in large numbers, and because they found Free America an unhampered field for self-expression. The Poles came to America comparatively late. America was well colonized by people of other nationalities when the Poles, persecuted in their country, resolved on seeking the shores of the Free Country. It was not long, however, before they won a literary distinction, that is, relatively, on a par with that of those nationalities that started to colonize the country. American writers of note have been generous in giving endorsement to the intellectual accomplishment of the Poles in this country.

Poles in America are proud to mention such of their countrymen as Julian Boeck, a noted educator, who laid plans for the first polytechnic institution in the United States. He won distinction in many other ways, and was honored by President Grant with an educational commis-

sion. Zalinski distinguished himself during the Civil War and is the inventor of the pneumatic torpedo gun. Dr. H. Kulosowski, who also served in the Civil War and made an enviable name, filled many important positions. They possess such institutions of learning as the Seminary in Detroit; St. Stanislaus College in Chicago; St. John's College in Philadelphia; Colleges at Erie, Pa.; at Cambridge Springs, Mass.; Pulaski, Wis., and Kitchener, Canada.

Poland today possesses schools and universities that rank with any school and university in the world. The University of Cracow needs no comment; the Polish Academy of science in Cracow stands pre-eminent in lettered Europe. It is a scientific body of the highest standard. The John Casimir University of Lemberg forms in conjunction with the University of Cracow the main spring of Polish intellectual activity, while the remaining institutions of learning in what formerly constituted the Kingdom of Poland such as the Theological Seminaries in Posen, the University of Warsaw and the thickly dispersed colleges in Galicia bid fair to become the educa-

tional standard of the Polish. Poland of today has individuals to represent her culture who are geniuses with international repute. Modjeska is still fresh in the mind of the world and especially in that of America. In philosophy the Poles are proud to mention Lutoslawski, the greatest living commentator on Platonic philosophy. In science, the discoverers of radium, Mde. Curie-Sklodowska; in literature, Henry Sienkiewicz; in music, Paderewski. It is such exponents that the Polish culture possesses today and they are in keeping with what leading writers of the day have to say of the Poles. They call them "One of the most cultured and most active races possessing a literature and civilization superior to that of their neighbors—Prussians, Austrians and Russians." "The Polish race, to those who are acquainted with it, is the subtlest and most delicate and one of the noblest and most heroic races of Europe." "This marvelous people (The Polish) are the most intellectually gifted in the world, and have produced the sweetest music, the best musicians, the finest artists and writers. They are the most imaginative and cultured race in Europe."

Poland, then, despite her ungenial geographical situation and blightful political conditions she suffered since the time she appeared among the family of nations, left all along indelible traces of intellectual progress. She left them before the University of Cracow rose to prominence. She left them particularly in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries, when Poland was called the most civilized country in Europe.¹ The Poles could perhaps produce no stronger proof to show that they have not ceased to be a nation one and undivided, than their inherent intellectual vitality, which has kept, and ever shall keep, them immune from assimilation.

The intellectual competency of the Polish race has always constituted a strong protest against its subjection to foreign rule. It admittedly proved an unsolvable problem to the usurpers who swore to denationalize their Polish subjects. The usurper cannot but feel that Poland is entering upon a new career; that she is rising from her

¹ Moltke—Account of Affairs and of the Social Conditions in Poland.

long, forced sleep; that she is still youthful—buoyant and full of aspirations; that her voice may no longer be safely disregarded, now when the whole world is arraigned against that autocracy which tried to extinguish Poland with no less scruples than it violated the rights of the Belgians and of the Americans, and when three-fourths of the world rallied to the oppressed nations. In a time as the present, the intellectual traditions of the thirty million Poles, together with their historical rights and recognized political competency, surely present, at the court of nations, the strongest plea for a speedy restoration of their freedom and independence.

CHAPTER VI. POLAND'S POLITICAL RIGHT.

"There is no political doctrine more false or more pernicious than that which represents vices in internal government as an extenuation of unjust oppression against a country and a consolation to mankind for the destruction of its independence."

—Sir James Mackintosh—An Account of the Partitions of Poland—Edinburg Review, Vol. XXXVII.

The Partition of Poland was admittedly a unique historical event, equally as were the causes that led to her dismemberment, and the reasons the usurpers advanced in apology for crushing her. They claimed that the Poles were not able to govern—that they wrangled continuously, fought among themselves to an extent that they threatened their own welfare and the welfare of the neighboring states. Strange, but the political philosophy of that time made it possible for

the partitioners to advance this mocking apology and to win adherents to their cause.

Are the Poles not able to self-govern? Is there anything in their history to show that they are not? There is nothing peculiar to other nations to designate them as competent of self-government, but which the Poles do not possess. If a periodical lack of political unity should be construed as marking the people unable to govern, what should parallel conditions elsewhere denote? If there were divisions in the Polish government, there were likewise divisions in other governments. If there were serious negative qualities found at times among the ruling classes in Poland, they were found in equal measure among the ruling bodies in other countries. Everything that was condemned in former Poland was found in like or even greater measure elsewhere. Poland had an eminent history of ten centuries. From the very beginning, she was an eager participant in every field of progress. Poland was a republican state in the midst of monarchism, the continuator of the Republics of Ancient Greece and Rome and

a prototype of the American government. Poland astonished the world with her phenomenal strength in coping with the enemy, in reforming her government, in establishing a school system that had no antecedent, and in framing a Constitution which could never have emanated from a people incapable of self-government. Not until it has been established the qualities like these denote the absence rather than the presence of governmental competency, could it be believed that the Polish are not able to govern.

Poland was a republic, and a Republican government is the highest form of government. "Republicanism" in the words of Brownson¹ "is really civilization as opposed to barbarism and all civility in the real sense of the word"; and, "every people that has a fully developed state or policy is a republican people." When a people is not ready to establish a republican government, it means that it has not as yet attained to that political accomplishment which designates a people in every sense able to self-govern.

We are naturally opposed to the rigid monarchism of the Middle Ages. We did not like to

¹ Politics, IV, Vol. 18, p. 22.

see the Czar of Russia hold absolute power, while his subjects were denied any share in the government. The Russians were considered behind time in political progress. But such nations as found themselves ready to establish a republican form of government, were not belated in political ideals, and certainly not incapable of self-government. No one would deny governmental competency to America, which is the greatest of modern republics. Just for that reason, it were perhaps illogical to deny ability to govern self to Poland, which was a great republic already in medieval times. While monarchism prevailed throughout Europe, Poland was designated by the then singular name: RES PUBLICA, and while despotism reigned elsewhere, in Poland freedom and toleration were extended to all. Poland was with England the very continuator of the Greecian and Roman republics. The country of Sobieski was a beacon of republicanism in the very midst of most rigid monarchism. Poland had ever been a teacher of those broad democratic ideals which consult the dignity of men and, for the full realization of which, America has entered

the world war. Her progressive political ideals gave birth to the early attempt at representative government, founded on the principle that the right to govern rests primarily with the people, and on the consequent recognition that the people are entitled to a voice in the government. For the freedom and religious tolerance she extended to all within her bounds; and for the full autonomy she allowed them, Poland has been called a United States of the Middle Ages, a political prototype of America. This would be a fair tribute paid to the governmental ability of any nation, and Poland claims it as peculiarly hers.

Two strong reasons Poland urges in favor of her competency of self-government, are her political independence which lasted for ten centuries, and the progress she achieved in jurisprudence.

On the supposition that the Poles are incapable of self-government it were pretty hard to account for the intellectual and political progress they made. Government is the form of society—the principle that informs the nation. Poland's

activity had a wide political bearing. Under Chrobry the Great, who is styled the Polish Charlemagne, Poland grew territorially, and exhibited an unusual activity in literature, politics and war. Already under Chroby the Great, Poland ruled over different races. None brought against her a protest against oppression. Poland could not accomplish this without being able to self govern. During the reign of Chrobry, Poland stood on a par with other nations in jurisprudence. She had her university just as other leading nations had theirs. The way the Poles then solidified their kingdom could even today serve an object lesson to other nations. She had then the best organized army in Europe. During her political existence, "From the reign of Chrobry the Great to the Crime of 1772," to quote Parsons,¹ "the Chivalry of Poland rejected ninety-two Tartar invasions any of which, if successful, would have at least jeopardized the existence of European civilization." Poland could not, just as no other country could, have accomplished this without being able to govern. It was not

¹ History of the Polish Catholicity and the Russian "Orthodoxy." Vol. V, p. 74.

without reason that Poland became to be known the greatest commonwealth of the Middle Ages. To her belonged Lithuania, Ruthenia and other minor nations. These enjoyed a full autonomy, and the Polish government respected their religion, language and customs. Poland did not interfere with such matters of their governments as were safeguarded by their autonomy. All peoples within the Polish boundaries enjoyed freedom and were allowed to develop within their own national genuis. It could scarcely be said that the Powers which partitioned Poland are better equipped for self-government, because they konw how to proscribe her language and her religion, and, contrary to the laws of God and humanity, to strive to subdue and blot out every vestige of her national rights.

Poland's territory extended from the Baltic to the Black sea, and from the Oder to where the Russian frost begins to chill. Poland could not have held the territory integral for centuries had she been devoid of the ability to govern.

The Thirteenth Century witnessed a rare development of jurisprudence. In this century, the

Magna Charta was drawn up, which was destined to constitute the basic law for the English speaking countries. In Germany, Frederick II was the first to publish laws in the German. In France, the Institutes of St. Louis were promulgated. Poland was not behind time in the legal propaganda of the age. Chrobry the Great, whom historians justly liken to Charlemagne for his pre-eminence as a warrior, administrator and legislator, won his epithet, "The Great," in a large measure for his wise and practical legal enactments.

To quote Dr. James J. Walsh¹: "Casimir the Great, who was born shortly after the close of the Thirteenth century, gave wise laws to Poland, which have constituted the basis of Polish law ever since. * * * At this time Poland was one of the most important countries in Europe."

We are more surprised at Poland's early democracy than able to go into its causes. Why should Poland, while in Bohemia, Hungary, Sweden and Denmark, in fact in all the European countries, the kings wrested all elective franchise from the

¹ The Thirteenth, Greatest of Centuries, p. 369.

people, allow her people to hold the elective vote? Why should Poland lead in political ideals and still be charged with inability to self-govern? Why should Poland, whilst rigid monarchism and feudalism reigned supreme elsewhere in Europe, have realized the popular government?

Was it because she was unable to govern? Because the Poles "did not know how to govern themselves?" Why should Poland have realized even at that period, totally antagonistic to republican ideals, the principle to which the Great Fathers of the American Constitution later gave concrete expression when they said: "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal—that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Why should Poland dare a republican government, surrounded, on all sides, by despotic and bureaucratic kingdoms? Why should Poland's Constitution of the Third of May be the oldest written constitution in Europe? Not because the Poles were incapable, but because they were and necessarily are, capable of self-government.

The king of Poland, elected by the majority of voters, occupied the same position to the government, as the President of the United States occupies to our government. If America acted on the principle: No taxation without representation, Poland put the same principle into practice already in the Fourteenth century. If America, in conformity with the principles of her government by the consent of the governed, is electing her president, Poland freely elected her kings ages before the first Americans drew up the American Constitution. If America possesses a Senate and a House of Commons, Poland had them centuries before. If America generously receives within her shores all peoples, Poland had ever been a veritable asylum to all the oppressed. If America allows religious toleration, this in Poland was an outstanding feature. These and other features of the two countries are strikingly alike. Poland elected her kings ever since 1370 after the demise of Casimir the Great. Even at this early period, the Poles did not recognize the immediate right of kings, but, justly insisting that this power primarily resides in the people,

elected their rulers. The Poles chose for their king one who was capable of executing the kingly office. At the same time the custom prevailed among their neighboring nations to recognize the "immediate right" of the rulers, and, as a consequence, they often became subject to the rule of one who lacked the essential qualifications of a ruler, and who was better fitted to perform the menial service of a king than to execute the kingly office.

If today a republican form of government is synonymous with governmental competency of a people, and rigid monarchism or despotism denotes political dormancy, and if a republic means today, as it had ever meant, political progress and despotism its lack, it is hard to understand how the republican Poles can consistently be charged with inability to self-govern.

CHAPTER VII.

POLAND MAKES WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY.

“In all other states of Europe, sovereign power had not ceased to be on the increase. The European nations, scarcely delivered from feudal tyranny, began everywhere to fear falling under the yoke of a single master. At this epoch, in the year 1573, the Poles alone, through the death of their king and the vacancy of the throne recovered all their rights. They alone, in the entire Europe, without disturbance, without bloodshed and through tranquil deliberations, reformed the form of government to their liking. . . . Poland, whose constitution never allowed her to be a conqueror, owed only to this tolerance her growth and the annexation of all the neighboring countries.”—Rulhiere—History of the Anarchy of Poland.

The three-fourths of the world, which united in their struggle for Democracy, will gladly recall

that Poland started to “make the world safe for Democracy,” back in the fourteenth century, and that, naturally, her cause had, for so many centuries, been the cause of the Allies today. It is interesting to recall today, that the Poles centuries ago, had “a government by the consent of the governed,” and that they let every people “free to determine its own policy, its own way to development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and the powerful.”

The government was of that broad and democratic nature which emanates from a liberty and equality loving people. Already in the fourteenth century, Poland had a Senate and the House of Delegates, or the “Upper” and the “Lower House.” Here sat dignitaries of the Church, Pataines and Castellans, in all 136 Senators. The Lower House contained delegates and representatives from all the parts of the country. For centuries before her partition, Poland administered the affairs of her State on the principles of Democracy. Judson C. Williver¹ draws a vivid picture of the Polish Democracy when he says: “The Pacta Coventa or Contract between

¹ Poland’s Story—Century Magazine, May, 1915.

nobles and the king, deprived the king of almost all real power, save when in war he headed the army. The *Pacta Coventa* at its full development must strike the twentieth century reader as rather a charter of liberties than an apple of discord. The king was elective; only the parliament could make war, impose taxes or commission ambassadors; parliament must be convened at least biennially; the king's cabinet was to be elected by the Diet once a year."

The Confederation of Lithuania and Ruthenia with Poland is another example of Polish Democracy, and classically brings out President Wilson's idea of how a nation should not seek to extend its own policy over any other nation or people. The two countries constituted with Poland the first voluntary alliance of three independent states in Europe, and were really a United States in Poland. They were governed by the "Crown," or by Poland. Each, however, possessed the fullest local and linguistic autonomy. They had their laws, their representatives, their own government, though, in cer-

tain matters, they were governed by the Constitution of Poland. Poland paid deference to their religion, language, their customs and traditions, and respected their dignity as a separate people.

The Polish national conception has never been imbued with a narrow-minded nationalism. There was no discrimination among the various nationalities within the Polish Commonwealth. There was no political preferment, no exclusion from offices of given nationalities. A Pole, a Lithuanian and Ruthenian were beneficiaries of the vast political community called the Polish Republic. The idea of nationality was with the Poles broad enough to cover ethical and religious differences. The Polish patriotism was analogous to the American one. "Lithuania, my country," thus begins his celebrated poem, Mickiewicz, Lithuanian birth, like so many other eminent Poles. By race a Ruthenian, by nationality a Pole, called themselves the Ruthenians, who claimed Poland as their country and who felt Polish.

Poland's Democracy entered every phase of the Polish life, and exerted the most wholesome influence upon her political and religious toleration and the sense of equality, which was pre-eminently peculiar to the Poles. The Poles loved to be equal and free. They loved to be tolerant to creed and nationality. They invariably acted on the belief that every one should be allowed to speak the language he learned from his mother, profess the religion he was taught and follow out the traditions he learned to love. "The Poles," says Moltke¹, "were tolerant. They took no part in religious wars that devastated Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Calvanists, Lutherans, Greeks long lived peacefully in their midst, and Poland for a long time was justly called the promised land of the Jews. The Poles actually forced their king to swear that they would tolerate all sects." Their notion of equality Moltke thus brings out: "The intercourse of the nobles was cordial and excessive deference was shown to rich and powerful. The dealing of the nobles with each other bore the stamp of their

¹ Account of Affairs and of the Social Conditions in Poland.

original equality. Their form of address which still survives, was “brother” The peasant did not belong to the lord; he could not be sold. The estate might pass into other hands, but the peasant was not obliged to leave his farm. The peasant was well off, he could raise money on his property and had regular tribunals. He enjoyed the possession of house and land. The Polish peasant enjoyed these privileges at a time when villanage existed in all the rest of Europe.”

The Polish Constitution, which regarded perfect equality of the rights of all the citizens of the State, had its origin in the democratic bent, peculiar to the Poles. In Poland, government was co-extensive with citizenship. As early as 1430, Poland set up a law guaranteeing personal immunity—“Neminem captivabimus nisi jure victum,” more than two centuries before England instituted her famous “Habeas Corpus.” Poland did not know the aristocracy which obtained in other countries, and when historians naively assert that too excessive aristocracy contributed to Poland’s downfall, they either compare the nobility of Poland to the aristocracy elsewhere, or errone-

ously speak of it as an oligarchical body. The fact is that the Polish nobles were essentially a voting body, enjoying perfect equality among themselves. They were eminently a political body. They were a development of the early defenders of their country against the onslaughts of the East. The position they occupied in that early home of republicanism corresponds to the position of the voters of the United States.

Had her political existence not been interfered with, it is not unlikely that a modern Poland would present the world with the most finished type of a democratic government. So high was the regard for freedom in Poland that political exiles, who once had reached the Polish territory, were by that very fact free. Such deference did the Poles pay to the dignity of people within her territory, that not one had brought forth a complaint against their mother country. And right here it must be remembered that Poland was a democracy at a time when the rest of European nations was rigidly monarchical, and, naturally, was left to her own initiative. She had nothing to copy from other governments, assimilate it,

make it her own and improve it. Rather the fact that she was a democratic government, surrounded and pressed in by despotic kingdoms, impeded her progress, and vastly contributed in the end to her political downfall.

“The brightest page in the history of Poland’s government is the liberty of the press. This unfortunate country is justly entitled to the credit of establishing the first free press known in the records of nations. Although envy has frequently tried to filch this brightest jewel from her crown, yet to Poland, and to Poland alone, is the world indebted for the discovery of that most important principle in all sound government, the freedom of the press. The American government borrowed this institution from Poland, and adopted it in its improved form as a corner-stone of the American Union. This most valuable of all political institutions, when contemplated in its various points of usefulness, is sufficient to immortalize Poland in the heart of every freeman. When all Europe had either silenced or shackled the press—even England not excepted—for the purpose of defeating the Re-

formation, and crushing religious and civil liberty in its bud, the persecuted followers of the great reformer found a secure retreat in the plains of Sarmatia, where all enjoyed freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and freedom of press, of literature, government, and law, all published their doctrines freely, and sent forth their tracts, treatises, translations, and reform publications, which were the principal means of spreading the great work of human improvement throughout Europe and America.”¹

Poland’s political toleration was the measure of her religious freedom. Happily uniting political affairs with religious, till her constitution presented a spectacle of a fusion of political science with religion, and ever mindful of the dignity of the individual subject, democratic Poland was the most tolerant country as regards religious worship. A chivalrous and courteous nation, Poland was an asylum at all time to the unfortunate; never did a Polish King persecute any faith. Protestantism lived freely in the

¹ Fletcher, p. 58, quoted by L. C. Saxton in: *The Fall of Poland*, p. 385.

country. The Poles were the first Christian people to treat the Jews as brothers and not as dogs.

Religious and political toleration has ever been founded with people, who are politically advanced, and found missing with those, who labor under barbarism. It recognizes the dignity of the individual and the dignity of the nation. A government which tolerates religious and national bents of people under its dominion, governs better than the one that dominates them with an iron fist, paying no regard to their ideals and aspirations. Here not the good of the state, but the good of the people through the state is the end of all social activity. Today, we associate political and religious toleration of a government with its political progress. We find no fault with the American government because it is tolerant. We say that it is the most efficient of governments. It tolerates all creeds, exactly as Poland had been tolerating them. America receives within her shore all who have the wish to come and make their home here; Poland anticipated America in this respect a thousand years. America extends citizenship to all eligible new-comers; Poland had

followed the same policy for centuries.

Should a nation, a government, which oppresses its subordinate people, robs them of their religion, their language, their very racial character of self-government, and a government which paid deference to the national customs of its subordinate people, tolerated their religion and permitted the use of their language, be unable to self-govern? The efficiency of a government is not measured by the ultimate good of the state, irrespective of the good of the individual, but it is measured by the good it renders to the individual. If one were to recall history, understand the nature of the Polish government, compare it with the autocratic governments even today, add to it the balance of progress Poland was prevented from achieving, it were impossible to say that the Poles, kin to Chrobry and Sobieski, brothers to Kosciuszko and Pulaski, are not qualified to self-govern.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAUSES OF POLAND'S DOWNFALL.

"Poland fell because her neighbors were greedy, unscrupulous and strong! Poland fell because she was generous, humane and weak! Poland fell, to tell you the truth, because she had no permanent army to defend her possessions."

—Ignace J. Paderewski—Address at the Auditorium Theatre, Chicago, Ill., February 5, 1916.

When the first conference of the Hague, 1899, enunciated that her improvident generosity was the cause of Poland's downfall, they state merely one of its minor causes. There were external, before the internal causes, to bring the country to ruin—causes which the usurpers had deliberately placed to bring Poland to ultimate subjection.

Poland's outstanding feature was her generosity in dealing with the neighboring nations. She would pursue no territorial advantages, nor covet to grow strong at the expense of her neigh-

bor. Poland was guided by disinterested motives; to save Christianity, to help advance civilization, to be of service to her neighbor. Had Poland pursued an aggressive policy, as did her neighboring countries for a century and more, had she subdued nations and taken territories, had she crushed her very future usurpers when she had them in her power, and thereby strengthened herself and weakened them, there is not the least doubt that she would have never been divided.

The internal causes which tended to bring Poland's downfall had their origin in the liberal Polish Constitution, but were rendered effective only under the influence of the external causes. The Polish Constitution did not make for centralism. The king enjoyed only a nominal power and was much at the mercy of the nobility, in whom the regime was really vested. An indifferent fact in itself, it proved, nevertheless, harmful in the face of the dangerous diplomatic developments in the European courts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Though they marked efficient statesmanship in theory, the elective

assemblies were in practice powerful factors to deduct from the central strength of the nation. Foreign candidates were allowed to compete for the Polish throne, and it was only too often that they succeeded in gaining many influential supporters. The danger was brought to a fatal development when the law of unanimity became a powerful and effective weapon in the hands of foreign candidates for King. In the seventeenth century the Polish Constitution would frequently present the world with the anomalous spectacle where, by virtue of this law of unanimity, a deputy could stop the most needed state reforms, or prevent even vital military measures from passing the Senate in the face of foreign invasions.

Military "unpreparedness" was another cause to dissolve the Polish government. The nobility retained in their hands, not only the authority of the State, but the power of the sword. Each noted Polish nobleman had his own army, officered by men of his choosing, and independent of the national army. Many magnates commanded strong contingents, and though they willingly

offered their service when the country was in need of it, still they were often jealous of the Crown, and took care not to unduly strengthen the regular army. The "Pospolite ruszenie," or general armament, was looked upon as the impenetrable defense of the country. It is clear that an army of this type, which bore more than the mere appearance of independent groups, could not hit as hard as a regular army, disciplined and officered on the plan of uniformity, and subject to an absolute command. It was not an unusual occurrence in Poland, that, while the enemy threatened to invade the country, the nobility thought it an opportune time to extort privileges from the Crown at the expense of suspending their military co-operation, and thus placing the safety of the nation into the hands of the enemy.

The political philosophy in Poland did not encourage military science. The nobility continued serving on horseback. To be a soldier, a knight of the Commonwealth, was considered a privilege, enjoyable by the nobility alone. The peasant was

no candidate for soldier. The dangerous possibilities with which the custom was fraught became a terrible actuality in the face of the military progress of the neighboring states. The Polish cavalry would suffice to assure security and independence, had other countries pursued a similar system. But while Russia had armed her peasants and recruited them into a strong and effective infantry, and Prussia began to rely more on a standing army, recruited from the lower classes, Poland possessed no infantry to support her cavalry, and adopted none of those military improvements, which made warfare an arduous and extensive science. The Polish horsemen were adequate for making short irruptions, for cutting the enemy in the open field, as they had done to the Tartar invasions, or to the Turks under Vienna. But they were necessarily unqualified for carrying out extensive hostilities on a comprehensive plan of operation. They grew more incapable of encountering the armies of the neighboring countries in proportion as these developed a strong and disciplined infantry. The nobles

in Poland, amounting to a half a million, would not arm their peasants nor trust a mercenary army. The military system of Russia and Prussia followed the nature of their governments. The Czar employed a standing army, recruited from the peasantry, on the principles of Eastern barbarism. They were, as slaves, ready to obey the will of their master. They were obedient tools of the will of the autocrat. If they had no ambition, they likewise had no fear. The same with some exception was true of Prussia. Poland had no standing army, recruited from the peasantry. Hence, the curious phenomenon that, while her future usurpers had a standing army, republican Poland would reject it.

The geographical situation of Poland also contributed to her partitions. No other country was so exposed to the inroads of invaders as was Poland. There were no seas, no mountains to protect her. England was protected by sea, Germany, by sea and mountains, Russia was open only in the west. But Poland was open from all sides. The Hun, the Tartar, the Turk and the Muscovite marched westward. Poland had no natural obstacles to oppose them with. Her open

boundaries appeared inviting to the Muscovite armies. The Teuton found it easy to press eastward. Then, too, Poland was a republic hemmed in among three military powers. She had no allies to co-operate with. Even for this, Poland had to fall in the face of the aggressive spirit of her neighbors. The result was soon brought home to Poland when, together with it, other more serious causes united in bringing down her ruin.

The external causes, that really were responsible for the dismemberment of Poland, can be made very clear today by pointing out that Poland of the eighteenth century suffered the fate of Belgium and Serbia of 1914. Like these, Poland had been suppressed by ruthless might.

Poland was a republican State. The neighbouring countries were rigid monarchies. In the east was Russia, a despotic power. West to Poland lay Prussia, characterized for her peculiar aggressiveness. While republican Poland necessarily lacked that centralistic power that makes for unity and is an indispensable asset for a country sandwiched between two aggressive powers, that very unity made Poland's enemies efficient

aggressors. The progress Russia made under Peter the Great, and the progress Prussia achieved under Frederick the Great were causes to vastly contribute to the fall of Poland. "The position of Poland," says Moltke¹, "made it a stumbling block to powerful neighbors who had in the last centuries made immense progress, and whose rapid development was certain to bring about their own ruin or to annihilate all obstacles. Both Austria and Prussia were unanimous in their opinion that they would prefer the "anarchy" of the republic to assisting in turning a good neighbor into a powerful monarchy which would be dangerous to all adjoining states."

For a long time Russia saw no reason to covet Poland. But with the accession of Peter the Great to the throne, Russia became aroused to that life which made her a European rather than an Asiatic state. "On, to the West," became with Russia a catchword—a slogan which she has followed to this day. Russia naturally looked West for a market. Her raw exports passed West through Poland. Russia naturally coveted the

¹ Account of Affairs and Social Conditions in Poland.

possession of a country so advantageously situated. It soon developed that Poland, "One of the oldest of European States," to quote Moltke¹, "beheld with terror its position between two of the youngest monarchies of this part of the world, whose aggressive development was completely blockaded by its geographical location." From the time of Peter the Great, Russia considered Poland a stepping stone to the West. Russian troops would infest the country under the slightest pretext. The situation reached its climax under Catherine. "It depends² only on me alone," said the Czarine, "whether the name of Poland is to be struck out of the map of Europe."

The nascent Prussia, on the other hand, was as eager to expand Eastward as Russia was to advance Westward. Since her emancipation from the Polish sovereignty, Prussia made an unusually rapid progress in the development of her State, and that military system which must be brought to an end by a victory of the allies. Having emerged victorious

¹ Account of Affairs and Social Conditions in Poland.

² Parsons—History of the Polish Catholicity and the Russian "Orthodoxy."

from her various and extended wars, Prussia became a fit party to powerful coalitions and a Power to be reckoned with. She already evinced her peculiar aggressiveness and those tendencies towards militarism and towards placing Might in the place of Right, and judging the morality of every activity by the end of the deified State, with which the world has of late become painfully familiar. Frederick the Great was a true exponent of Prussianism, and, naturally, found in Catherine of Russia a faithful co-opeartor in their common desire of strengthening their power by the division of Poland.

What strikes one as peculiar the way the causes for the downfall of Poland have been accounted for, is the undue emphasis on the internal causes to the disregard of the external causes, which plainly contributed to the suppression of the Kingdom. But as the usurpers must be blamed for the external, and Poland for the internal causes, and as the usurpers became Poland's historians, it is not hard to understand why such was the case. It lay, of course, in the interest of the usurpers to justify the partitions and to in-

criminate the nation. They would not say that Poland fell because they placed causes to lead to her downfall, but they said: Poland could no longer exist for her internal troubles, which forfeited her right to self-government.

As there is no other partition of a country as that of Poland, so there is no other, more false and unjust misrepresentation of the history of Poland leading to the partitions. The way Polish history of the last century and a half has been falsified and misrepresented is without a parallel, and one of its effects has, until recently, been a foregone conviction that the Poles were unable to govern themselves. Adepts to the theory that the excessive nobility caused the ruin of the country—that defective military science caused the ruin of the country—that Poland lacked that centralistic power which makes for unity and strength, said that these were only imperfections flowing out of the two cardinal defects of the country, its “anarchy” and its “Liberum Veto.” Those who strove to justify the partition and tarnish the competency of the Polish to self-govern-

ment, emphasized these with as much vehemence as inconsistency.

What was the Polish anarchy? What were its causes? Could one expect a better situation under the like political conditions? Were there no similar, perhaps worse, anarchies elsewhere?

CHAPTER IX.

THE SO-CALLED POLISH ANARCHY.

“Catherine (Queen of Russia) was the great criminal. She had for eight years oppressed, betrayed and ravaged Poland—imposed a king on that country—prevented all reformation of the government—fomented divisions among the nobility—and, in one word, created and maintained that anarchy which she at length used as a pretense for dismemberment.”

—Sir James MacKintosh—An Account of the Partitions of Poland—Edinburgh Review, Vol. XXXVII.

No government is without fault, and a temporary mismanagement or confusion in the government does not mean that the people do not know how to govern themselves. If this were true, then one could safely say that no people on earth are really capable of self-government. The capacity of the American government cannot be judged by the period of the Civil War. Such periods are

judged in the light of their causes and effects. The defection of the slave-holding states, and the bloody struggle for national unity that followed it, were not signs of "anarchy" nor signs that the Americans were incapable of self-government. They rather brought out positive qualities in the life of the people. They gave the American people a seriousness, dignity and manliness they had perhaps up to that time lacked. It were certainly unfair to the French to take the period of the French Revolution to judge by it the competency of the French government. One would certainly get a wrong idea about the Irish being able to govern self, if he were to judge them by the period of the Penal Code.

It is wrong to point out the disturbed conditions in Poland preceding the partitions, as bringing her downfall, and to forget similar and worse political conditions, that obtained in practically every European country at that time. A political hurricane swept over Europe at that time. All the countries felt the shock. All tottered under its impact. None was found perfect. All needed to be reformed. Some governments survived the

cataclysm. Others passed through it, but permanently scarred. Poland fell, but not as a result of this “shock” alone. There were other causes to contribute to Poland’s fall, which were not peculiar to other countries. But because Poland lost her independence, while other countries had accidentally escaped a similar misfortune, it is falsehood to say that Poland fell as a result of her “anarchy,” and an inability of her people to govern self.

Many historians are over-conclusive in treating the causes underlying the downfall of Poland. They would do well to study the history of particular nations on a broader scale, to study the relation of one nation to another, and in turn their relation to Poland, and to establish a parallel between the “anarchy” of Poland and the “anarchy” in other countries. We would refer them to unprejudiced sources, not Polish, for they are likely to think them one-sided, but to sources prepared by others than Poles, who treated the question from an objective point of view.

Perhaps adepts to theories that Poland lost self-government through her anarchy, would not like to read Marius-Ary Leblong's work on Poland. "Indeed," he says, "it is culpable, it is criminal ingratitude to charge Poland with anarchy—she is the first martyr of European democracy. We owe her with our veneration for the magnificent and pathetic self-sacrifice, an eternal acknowledgement for her inspiring devotion, which brought her to misery." Perhaps such historians would mitigate their convictions regarding the Polish "anarchy" as responsible for her downfall, had they the patience to read Michelet, who made a laborious study of Poland and could truly say: "We have sought the truth eagerly, long, laboriously, with a truly religious fervor. No other reading, no other study has cost us so much to attain it." Such a scholar is worth while listening to, and he says: "In the profound darkness they brought about, the murderers came and stoutly blasphemed over the corpse of their victim. There was no Poland. She did not exist. * * * We have killed nothing."

"Then, seeing the stupefaction of Europe, its silence, and that many seemed to believe them,

they added coldly: "Besides, if she existed, she deserved to die. * * * If there were a Poland, it would be a power of the Middle Ages, a backward state, addicted to aristocratic institutions."

The term "anarchy" was not a particular term to designate the dangerous political condition which obtained in Poland towards the close of the eighteenth century. It was a general term to express the much disturbed political affairs which were then common to nearly every European country. There was anarchy in Italy and Spain, France and England. The very usurpers, who sought to justify the dismemberment of Poland in her disturbed conditions, had to contend with unbalanced political affairs at home which were worse than those in Poland.

The French revolution was coeval with the partitions of Poland. There was, in many respects, a close relation between the two. One yielded a decided influence on the other. Historians find no difficulty in accounting for the causes which led to the French Revolution. No historian has ever said, however, that the Revolution in France followed as a result of the French

not being able to self govern. In fact, the French anarchy or revolution covered a period of time too short to justify any assertion of this nature. It was an "Age of Anarchism," and France plunged deeper than did other countries. No other country was so near disintegration as was France during the terrible days of her Revolution. With her King executed, with her government abolished, with adventurers at the head of a provisional government, with one faction risen in arms against another, with the scaffold as the supreme court of justice, and with foreign armies marching on Paris, France presented the very nest of anarchism at a time when Poland had yet possessed political being. H. Vast¹ draws a life-like picture of Poland during the partitions when he says of France: "Five foreign armies entered French territory and at the same time civil war raged throughout the interior. La Vendee, uprising, opened to emigrants and to the Enlish, the road to the centre of France. * * *

The conference which held at Anvers on the morrow of the treason of Domouriez left no one

¹ *La Guerre Montaguarde.*

doubting as to the real intention of the coalition. * * * Auckland declared that England intended to reduce France to a veritable political non-entity. * * * The combination which obtained at the court of Vienna consisted in annexing the French Flanders, Artois and Picardie to Austria. * * * The Prussian diplomats desired to keep for their sovereign the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. The Russian minister, Markoff, said to Coblenz : "Take possession of the French provinces which are to your convenience." France, then, was not far from suffering the fate of Poland. Had France occupied the territory Poland occupies, what doubt is there but that she would have been divided in the same way Poland had been divided, and historians, who dared not write to displease their sovereigns, would say : France fell because she did not know how to govern self.

If the conditions that prevailed in Poland during the partitions deserve the name of anarchy, what should the French revolution be called? If the "anarchy" of Poland should be a sign of the absence of governmental competency in Poland,

should the period of the French revolution be construed as a sign of its presence in France? But the periods were too short to indicate any permanent quality of the two governments.

“Dissensions, anarchy, inability of governing ourselves! How do these things look in the light of positive historical facts? Our Statute of Wislica, established in 1347, was chronologically the first complete code of Christian Europe. * * *

“Already in the fifteenth century, a self-governing country, Poland became, in 1573, a regular republic, with kings elected for life, as presidents. In 1430, consequently 259 years before the Habeas Corpus of England, and 359 years before the Declaration of Human Rights in France, Poland established her famous laws: “Neminem captivabimus, nisi iure victum,” which, translated into English, means: “Nobody should be detained unless legally convicted.”

“Our broad, liberal constitution of 1791 preceded by 57 years the constitution of Germany and of Austria, and by 114 years the so-called constitution of Russia. And all these momentous reforms, all these radical changes, unlike in other

countries, were accomplished without revolution, without any bloodshed, without the loss of one single human life; by unanimous vote, in a quiet, most peaceful, most dignified way. Does it prove our anarchy; does it prove our inability of governing ourselves?"¹

To accuse France of not being able to self-govern because of her temporary anarchy, would be to lay the same charge at the feet of most of the European nations at that time; for all labored under anarchistic tendencies in some form or other. You cannot judge France by the short period of the revolution to the exclusion of centuries of the most noble history—her early defense of Christianity, her devotedness to letters and arts any more than you can judge Poland by the short period of her history, which is wrongly called anarchical in the face of her creditable history, her early endeavor to advance and defend Christianity—her tolerant democracy—her unprecedented attempt at a radical reform of her government. Well could a contemporary writer

¹ Ignace J. Paderewski—Address at the Auditorium Theatre, Chicago, Illinois, February 5th, 1916.

say: "If you blight with the name anarchy the former political system of Poland, and you commit a grievous historical fault; you take the symptoms of a period relatively short for the general character of the whole history of Poland; you pass over in complete silence a long and brilliant period of her history; you disregard the immense services rendered by this nation to humanity."

But still the general charge is that there was anarchy in Poland and that it was largely the result of an ill-regulated government. What was the anarchy? It was not an underhand machination of a given party in the government to do away with the King, or to subvert the constitution of the State. Such had never been the case in Poland. The Poles had ever evinced the highest regard for their King. History records no instance where an attempt had been made to take the life of any of the large number of Kings that graced the royal catalog of Poland. If the "anarchy" should mean a continued attempt to betray the country, we again deny that such was the case with Poland. True, there were individuals at times just as they were in every country of

the globe, who made attempts to advance private, at the expense of the public good. They formed, however, exceptions, hardly meriting a mention, except, perhaps, to bring out the rare degree of resentment the nation showed them, and the complete social and political deprivations they suffered as a result. This brings out the high quality of citizenship rather than its absence.

Poland was an elective monarchy. At the demise of the king, the voters (the nobility) assembled to elect a new king, much in the same way as the electoral college of the United States elects the President. Different political parties supported their candidate for king. The defeated party would naturally resent their defeat, and take measures to win at the next election. Such a state of affairs was perhaps not the best factor to promote the welfare of the State, though it fostered that activity in the government which follows opposition of parties—a truth which is common knowledge in the United States. Poland was an early democracy—and the Polish State was co-extensive with the “people,” as then under-

stood. It should be remembered that Poland was a republican state surrounded by monarchial powers—that her appreciation of freedom and equality based on the dignity of the individual—her early attempt at popular voting—her early appreciation of “a government by the consent of the governed”¹ though they ill compared with the policy of the centralistic powers which surrounded her, they nevertheless denoted Poland’s political competency in the light of the now political doctrines. Poland cannot be justly judged by the present, much perfected, system of popular voting. In putting the republican theory into practice, she necessarily stumbled over unforeseen obstacles.

Poland cannot be made to respond for the “anarchy” Russia and Prussia unceasingly fomented among her people in an effort to find a pretext for bringing the country to ruin. Perhaps it would be just as correct to attribute to Poland her alleged incapacity to self-govern as a result of her anarchy external powers did everything to encourage, as it would be right to say that the

¹ President Wilson—Message to the Senate, January 22, 1917.

Belgians are unable to self-govern because they could not stay the onrush of the German army in 1914. "Catherine," says Sir James MacKintosh,¹ "was the great criminal. She had for eight years oppressed, betrayed and ravaged Poland—imposed a king on that country—prevented all reformation of the government—fomented divisions among the nobility—and in one word created and maintained that anarchy which she at length used as a pretense for dismemberment." "Since the last century," says Moltke,² "Poland had been accustomed to seeing Russian armies within its boundaries, sometimes to protect the so-called oppressed dissenters, * * * once to preserve the freedom of the nobility, that is the anarchy so necessary to the neighbor, another time to keep the "Liberum Veto" in force; for after public opinion had condemned it, Russian arms continued to restore it." Such is the nature of the "Polish anarchy" and the extent of responsibility that should be attributed not to Poland, but to the usurpers of Poland.

¹ An account of the Partitions of Poland—Edinburgh Review, Vol. XXXVII.

² Account of Affairs and Social Conditions in Poland.

CHAPTER X. THE “LIBERUM VETO.”

If it seems utterly inexplicable that a legislature would thus surrender (by virtue of the Liberum Veto) all its power, a medieval Pole might with reason retort, that in the American Senate unlimited debate is even now permitted, that according to high parliamentary authority, the great bulk of legislation is done virtually by unanimous consent, and, most suggestive of all, that a single member by a point of order, may strike from a supply bill any proposed limitation on the use of the funds.”

—Judson C. Williver—Poland’s Story—Century Magazine, May, 1915.

Quite a logical development of the Liberal constitution of Poland was the law of unanimity, commonly known as the “Liberum Veto.” In its simplest form, it was a power or privilege enjoyed by every deputy in the Polish senate to prevent any measure from becoming a law by calling

out "Liberum Veto." It was based on the common assumption¹ of the absolute equality of every Polish nobleman, and its consequent corollary, that the majority had no right to impose laws which would conflict with the interest of the minority, even should the minority consist of a single deputy. If, then, a single deputy believed that a measure at issue was at variance with the good of his constituency, he was free to rise and call out: "Liberum Veto," when the measure at once fell to the ground. At its fullest development, the Liberum Veto gave any single deputy the power to suspend at any time, and for any reason, the proceedings of the Diet, when all the measures already passed became null and void, and if they were to become laws at all, they had to be resubmitted at the next Diet. In itself, and without relation to its origin and the nature of the Polish government and the civic virtues of the old Polish nobles, the law of unanimity appears vicious in its nature, dangerous in its application and out of keeping with all the prin-

¹ Bain.

ciples of good government. But if it is left in its proper element, and judged, not as isolated, but in relation to its origin and those factors which rendered it harmless and inoffensive, it assumes the character of a useful law rather than a vicious measure.

The Liberum Veto owed its origin to the democratic spirit of the Poles, and developed as a corollary to the absolute equality of the noblemen. It was a practical measure when it was necessary to cut short lengthy debates, when Poland was constantly exposed to the inroads of the Eastern barbarians, and when the Dietines had to act quickly and decisively in the face of ever-threatening danger. The law of unanimity extended further than the Polish nation. Charlemagne enacted a law which required unanimity in legislative assemblies. It was also found in the early Sabori or conventions in Russia.

To properly appreciate the nature of the Liberum Veto, and to arrive at a fair knowledge of its practicability, it is necessary to review it in its potential stage, where it was originally intended to be confined. This stage covered the

period from the time the law was first used up to 1652, when no assembly was dissolved by means of the privilege. Again, it is one thing to judge it in theory and with reference to modern legislative chambers, and quite another thing to view it in practice, and as a development of the unique structure of the old Polish constitution.

Up to 1652, no Diet had been dissolved by virtue of the absolute negative, though for centuries before that time the Dietines had as much power to suspend legislative proceedings as they had from the middle of the seventeenth, to the middle of the eighteenth century, when the privilege was made use of. Until the time when the first Diet was dissolved, the law of unanimity resolved itself into the principle, common to legislative assemblies, of the minority acceding to the will of the majority; for, though in theory every Polish Senator was conscious of the enormous power he was at liberty to exercise by virtue of the Liberum Veto, that he was really co-extensive with the State, yet in practice he invariably waived his privilege when the good of the commonwealth was at issue.

In its early application, then, the Liberum Veto was really a principle of the minority and the majority. Whatever potential evil there was in the law, it was more than offset by the civic virtues of the Dietines, by their deeply rooted love of country, and by the admirable disinterestedness of the Polish gentry. Free from the disruptive influences of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Poles assembled in the Diet would think it a vicious crime to dissolve its deliberations to further private good at the expense of the Republic. The Pole placed his love of country next to the love of God, and he would no more think of being disloyal to his country, which gave him so powerful a privilege as the Liberum Veto, than he would forego to defend his faith against the infidel. "Every infringement," says Moltke,¹ "upon the unanimity of vote was considered a national calamity. A heredity curse was placed upon such a deputy, and his family went into disrepute; * * * he was cursed by the nation and hated by all." If you prescind the power a

¹ Moltke—Account of Affairs and of the Social Conditions of Poland.

deputy to the Polish Senate possessed in the Liberum Veto from his patriotic fervor which was with him synonymous with religious zeal, and from the traditional disinterestedness with which he invariably placed the public good above the private, and from these provisions in the Polish Constitution which were to offset its ruinous possibilities, you would have the Liberum Veto in its crude nature, with its dangerous possibilities without its mitigating relations, a vicious principle rather than a practical measure, an anomalous law rather than a logical development of the old Polish constitution, a tendency towards anarchy rather than a traditional appreciation of freedom.

If one were to endow a modern legislative body with the law of unanimity that obtained in ancient Poland, and judge its dangerous possibilities by the certain disorder it would create in an assembly of hundreds of Senators, his conclusion would be far from being correct. In a modern assembly where a multitude of delegates assemble, each possessing the power of vetoing any measure that did not meet his approval,

unanimity would be entirely out of question. The old Polish Senate, where the law of unanimity was practicable, was much simpler in its procedure than are modern legislative chambers. The Polish Senators were not representatives, but ministers. They had no power to act as they saw it opportune, but their power was limited by the rigid instructions they received from their constituencies. The Diet, again, was not a deliberative assembly as are modern Senates, but a convention of delegates whose entire business consisted in declaring the will of their constituencies.

Before the meeting of the general Diet, where the Liberum Veto was exercisable, provincial councils were held, where deputies convened to discuss questions to be presented at the general Diet. Upon agreement of such councils as to the questions at issue, delegates were chosen to represent them at the General Diet by placing their claims or concessions. They were not commissioned to deliberate. The General Diet was not formally a deliberative chamber. Their business was simple to present the result of the delibera-

tions of the provincial councils. In this way, the number of delegates to the General Diet was largely reduced and the proceedings of the Diet much simplified. The American Constitution offers striking points of similarity to the old Polish Constitution in the way it provides for the election of the President, not immediately by the people, but meditately through the electors.

Each delegate, of course, was empowered to suspend the Diet by his Liberum Veto privilege, but as a matter of fact he did not use it until 1652, but readily forewent the claims of his constituency, if the good of the State demanded. A telling example of this we have in 1401, when the dissenting minority acceded to the majority to purchase a tract of land, Dobrzyn, from the Knights of the Cross. It was a custom that the minor Diets to give their deputies imperative instructions to offer, not regarding their own claims, no opposition to measures which furthered the good of the Republic.

It is quite another thing to consider the Liberum Veto in the era of its abuse, when the dissolution of the old Polish civil virtues rendered

it possible for the law of unanimity to evolve from its potential state to a vicious actuality in the face of external pressure. When Sicinski, a deputy from Upita, first used his power to suspend the action of the Diet in 1652, he instituted a dangerous precedent, and at once displaced by his selfish motive all the traditional factors which kept it from becoming harmful. The nation cursed the selfish deputy. His family went into disrenown. He was shorn of citizenship and placed without the pale of society. But the evil had been done. Thereafter, Diets had been dissolved frequently and relentlessly; business, however pressing, was often brought to a standstill; a deputy could always be bribed to make use of his absolute power.

Had the infamous deputy of Upita lived a century earlier, his selfish act would not likely have proved dangerous, as the Polish civic virtues were then at their best, and found a more laudable outlet than the Liberum Veto. But it was a time when the traditional patriotism of the nobility showed symptoms of weakness, and when the neighboring States started to lay foundations

for the subsequent aggressive monarchies, and when political science became so vitiated that it was considered an act of high diplomacy to suppress one nation for the sake of another. The Poles were not without fault. The high lords would wrest undue concessions from the crown. Jealousies of the many influential families were getting worse every day. Then it was that the Liberum Veto became an as unreasonable as vicious privilege in the hands of quarreling factions. The minority would seldom accede to the majority. The privilege was often had recourse to in furtherance of private good to the detriment of the Republic. Then the world beheld the unprecedented spectacle in political history when one dissenting voice would oppose the will of the whole nation to arrest its activity, to deprive it of its power of action, to render it inanimate and make it a plaything in the hands of possible invaders.

It is forcibly plain what havoc had the Liberum Veto played with the integrity of Poland in relation to the elective Diets, to the geographical position of Poland, and the rapid development of

the aggressive monarchies which set their lustful eyes on Poland. The fact that foreign candidates were accessible to the competition for the Polish throne was a menace to the Republic, which naturally became rampant with the abuse of the Liberum Veto. It was within the power of foreigners to procure, by its means, the suspension of an elective Diet in their favor. The Liberum Veto was no reason for the division of Poland, for it lay in the interest of Russia to suppress her just as much as it lay in the interest of Prussia to secure a portion of the Polish territory. Poland's thriving democracy alone constituted a sufficient reason with the three nations to break up her integrity. But if these were reasons for the dismemberment, the Liberum Veto was a powerful instrument in the hands of Poland's future usurpers in bringing their nefarious deed to a speedier finish. Russian gold flooded the country, and renegade deputies could always be found to disrupt the deliberations of the Diet. It is a historical fact that after public opinion condemned the law of unanimity and the Polish noblemen willingly disclaimed it, Russia did everything to keep it in force.

With the national reassertion after the first partition and the vigorous reformatory measures the Poles adopted to save their country, the Liberum Veto lost its force. It had been branded as an instrument of foreign policy to disrupt the State, and, as a consequence, in the Diets held between 1778 and 1788 no deputy dared employ his negative. Legislation was again voted and passed on the principle of the majority.

If it should appear altogether impossible how a medieval Poland should surrender all her legislative power into the hands of a single deputy, and thus make herself co-extensive with one subject, it were well to remember that the development of the Liberum Veto far exceeded its original scope, that the legislation in Poland up to 1652 was done on the principle of the majority, that the Spartan virtues of the medieval Poles did more than compensate for the potential danger of the fatal law, that it was only during her period of decline that it became harmful, and that it was permanently abolished in the Constitution of the 3rd of May, 1789.

If again it were insisted that the development of the Liberum Veto was ascribed to the nation's limited ability to self-govern rather than to the excessive appreciation of freedom and equality among the Poles, it would be hard to account for Poland making a creditable history with so disruptive an element, unless she was the more able to self-govern because she governed despite it. The Liberum Veto was a peculiarly Polish law, and is intelligible only in the light of the Polish political philosophy and the old Polish idea of patriotism. Considered in the light of modern legislative assemblies, the Liberum Veto has no meaning, unless it is naively used to depreciate the ability of the Poles to self-govern.

To assert that the Liberum Veto with its concomitant tolerant democracy brought the division of Poland, is to disregard the teaching of history. France, for example, with her hereditary monarchy, a centralized power with no Liberum Veto, escaped the fate of Poland only because her geographical situation made her partition impossible. Spain, Germany, England and Austria had their periods of decadence, strifes and civil wars,

when invasions of foreign armies would have meant a destruction of helpless nations. Many nations with institutions equally objectionable continued for ages safe and powerful.

The old Liberum Veto, which was erroneously branded as the cause of Poland's downfall, bears curious lines of resemblance to the senatorial privilege of filibuster. By it, like by the Liberum Veto in old Poland, one senator can oppose the will of the whole house. "A little group of willful men," in the words of President Wilson, have the power to render the country "helpless and contemptible."

When Senator Stone brought to naught a legislation which was intended by the majority, he enacted the role of Sicinski; and when the Sixty-fourth Congress expired March 4th, without succeeding to grant the President the necessary power to protect the right of American citizens and to uphold the honor and safeguard the integrity of America, because of the effective opposition of the very small minority, it appeared as though an old Polish Diet held its session in Washington.

CHAPTER XI.

REFORMATORY MEASURES AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS.

"In France, to gain liberty, they began with anarchy; in Poland, the nation was given liberty and independence, the respect for the law, for person and property was assured, and all this without violence, without murder solely through the virtue of the courage of the nation, which, realizing her misfortune and her error, knew how to heal her wounds."

--Baron d'Escaire, after Poland promulgated her Constitution of the 3rd of May, 1791.

It were unfair to insist that internal vices brought the downfall of the Polish republic, and, that these bespoke the Poles incapable of self-government, and to forego quoting the reformatory measures they took in an effort to save their country, and the economic and social progress they achieved since the partitions. Capability is

judged by the efficiency in successfully coping with obstacles, and the governmental efficiency of the Poles is classically brought out in the measures they adopted against national disintegration. Poland, at the time of the partitions, was not an overgrown, inanimate colossus which had existed and was ready to decay because the time to decay came. She was in every respect a nation to show a rare resisting activity, and to rally her forces to ward off the threatened encroachments by foreign powers. The Polish nation was at bottom sound and possessed a surprising amount of vitality and reserved strength.

It were equally unfair to the Poles to review their reformatory measures and economic progress without paying regard to the violent opposition that was constantly put in their way by the governments that usurped their rights. Autocratic in principle and deed, these governments grew fearful and jealous of the expansion of the Polish democracy, and did not hesitate long to manifest their disapproval by armed interference. Naturally, Poland was obliged to work out her political reform under the very torrent of

disruptive influence from without. It must be remembered that the partitions of Poland took place not long before the Council of Vienna occurred, and that the same principles on which the map of Europe was then made over, guided the three powers in their relation to Poland. It was a time when the so-called principles of legitimacy, or the rights of the rulers in opposition to the rights of the people held sway in Europe. Nations had no right distinct from their sovereigns, and sovereignty was gotten by conquest. The law of force was a principle Prussia acted on that time as she acts today. Autocracy claimed the leadership of the world, and the principle: "To the victim belong the spoils" was then an open motto with autocratic rulers. The principles which enabled the Congress of Vienna to link up in a single unnatural kingdom of the Belgians and the Dutch, and then unite Norway to Sweden, were applied in their fullest force to the dismembered Poland. Prussia's intrigues and perfidies played in the partition, and to what an extent it interfered with anything like a reformatory measure in Poland, which were manifestly

opposed to Prussia's aims, can be amply gathered today from the world-wide Prussian system of espionage and intriguery that came to light in the war.

For twenty years after the first partition, Poland led a life of a buoyant political regeneration. During that period she had not only maintained her own, but achieved remarkable success in coping with her enemy. Poland realized her threatened situation, and at once decided on a remedy. Following the first dismemberment, Poland was no longer the country which abused the "Liberum Veto," no longer the "anarchial" nation which thought nothing of dissolving Diets. Poland was repentant of fault and expectant of a better future. She was redeemed by her own mistake; on longer frivolous, but grave, not thoughtless but reflecting; not heedless of danger, but watchful for every move of her enemy. Poland was again the nation which gave birth to a Chroby, a Sobieski and a Corpenicus, and which was soon to create her famous Constitution and call forth her army of writers and poets, musicians and painters to keep alive her ancient heart.

Poland at this time was an active unit in the family of nations, with vitality enough to overcome all the evils that beset her. She was not merely able to exist, but to contribute to the general fund of civilization, to feel with humanity, to labor for humanity and to carry out her idea of freedom and democracy.

The first great measure the Poles took to rescue their country from foreign aggression was to institute the "Perpetual Council," immediately after the first partition and during the temporary withdrawal of the Russian army from the Polish territory. Its immediate purpose was to centralize state authority with a view of a more concerted activity. Comprising thirty-six members, eighteen senators and eighteen representatives of the nobility to be elected every two years, the Perpetual Council embraced five departments which were in nature and purpose similar to the governmental department of the United States. They were: The foreign department; the coercive, or the department of the police; the military department; the department of justice and the treasury department. The king exercised the

office of president. The Perpetual Council comprised men who were well qualified to uphold the honor of the nation, and who did laudable work in the interest of the country.

But the council was only a forerunner of the thorough regeneration of the country, which was reached some twenty years later, in the establishment of the Constitution of the 3rd of May, of whose authors MacKintosh said:¹ "History will one day do justice to that illustrious body and hold out to posterity, as the perfect model of the most arduous reformation—that revolution which fell to the ground from no want of wisdom on their part, but from the irresistible power and detestable wickedness of their enemies."

Another mark of Poland's social and political vitality at this time was the institution of the Commission of Education, which was really the first European Ministry of Education. Even in normal time, such measures as the Perpetual Council, the Commission of Education and the institution of the Constitution of the 3rd of May, could not help evoking the admiration of those

¹ An account of the Partitions of Poland—Edinburgh Review, Vol. XXXVII.

nations which leaned towards democratic principles, if not serving them object lessons. But as the Poles carried them through when they were much weakened by the first partition, when their enemy did everything to create turmoil in the country and whispered about that they were not able to take care of their government, and when the Russian bayonet was drawn from the scabbard to prevent any and all internal reforms that were likely to strengthen the country, we justly ask with right-minded historians whether they do not denote an unusual national vitality, a deep political foresight, a rare intellectual soundness and connote political competency? It is a pride for republican governments today to recall how well had Poland understood the value of an educated body social, and, consequently, a high quality of citizenship as a cornerstone to national integrity and development.

The social and political vitality of Poland at this time could not be at a low ebb, when it could in the midst of the most disastrous calamities that continued to rend her very vitals, call forth to her rescue such gallant scholars and statesmen

as Kollontay, Malachowski, Ignatius Potocki, A. Czartoryski, A. Zamojski, A. Poniatowski, G. Piramowicz, John Andrew Sniadecki and a host of others. Surely, Poland should be given credit for the remarkable virtues she displayed at her very political deathbed, and it would be but justice to her traditions not to insist that there was "anarchy" in Poland, and for that reason she forfeited her right to self-existence and lost her capacity of self-government she enjoyed for ten centuries.

The Educational Commission, the Perpetual Council and the Constitution of the 3rd of May were not the only instances of the Polish regeneration after the first partition. Other equally sweeping reforms followed. Commerce and the manifold youthful industries received a new and vigorous encouragement. Agriculture was given the closest attention. About three hundred manufacturing plants were built in a short time, and their produce greatly reduced the import. Progress took everywhere a tangible form. Agricultural schools were founded and schools to teach forestry and mining sprung up in a short

time. A productive revenue and a regular army were established. The government revenue doubled in a short time, the fatal law of unanimity was branded as an instrument of Russian policy, and, as a consequence, no delegate was found daring enough to use it.

The vigorous social and economic uplift that went parallel with the educational progress, offers the finest specimen of the nation's reserved store of strength and vitality. The various industries did much in the way of bridging the traditional chasm that separated the nobility from the lower classes. Noblemen engaged in business. Banks began to flourish and commerce received royal help and encouragement. Roads were built and repaired, and special state departments were instituted to look after their condition. Rivers were dredged and widened and canals built. Polish manufactured goods made their appearance in foreign markets.

While these excellent symptoms of public sense and power were in evidence, the Great Diet assembled in Warsaw to frame a new constitution, which was a crowning work to the foregoing re-

forms. The four years when the constitution was discussed and drafted constituted the finest example of wisdom and integrity, patriotic duty and devotedness to principles that ever animated a national assembly. And Poland achieved her reforms under the greatest external disadvantages, but yet quietly and without the rattle of the guillotine and the clash of fratricidal swords. While the last partition had not yet taken place, Poland was the most liberally governed country in Europe.

One of the most encouraging phases about the Polish life for last century or more is the fact that the Poles have lived and developed in the spirit of their Constitution of the 3rd of May, that they increased numerically by half, and that they developed economically and industrially. Conformable to the Constitution which paved the way between the nobility and the peasants, and, of course, as an offset to the exterminative policy of their enemy, the Poles developed a middle class that constitutes a real backbone to their national and economic life.

It is a compelling fact that in the more recent history of dismembered Poland, that the Poles retaliated every political deprivation with economic and industrial organizations. This is especially true of the Poles under Prussia, where the anti-Polish pressure was heaviest. Every drastic measure the German government advanced against them, the Poles answered by organizing more co-operative societies and starting a more thorough boycott of German goods. The war Prussia waged on the Polish nationality for the last century and more resulted in a phenomenal growth of Polish co-operative stores and co-operative societies. The Province of Posen presents one network of well-organized and efficient Polish co-operative societies. The agricultural circles are especially remarkable for their numbers, as they exist in almost every village. The Polish organizations in the Province of Posen form one large union, having a central bank, which opened business with 6,000,000 marks. Enough to say, the development of the middle class and the co-operative movement in the Province of Posen have been considered, even by Prussians, the

healthiest symptoms of the Polish social life. Galicia and the Kingdom followed suit and built up numerous co-operative societies and corporations, modeled after those in Posen. They proved of immense advantage in dealing with the relief of hunger and suffering in the war.

Modern Poland is no longer the country of knight-errants, of excessive idealism and of freedom, and too ready to give up her industry and her business into foreign hands. She is—she was before the war—a thickly populated and industrially prosperous—a thoroughly modern nation with a middle class that is to play an important part in her future.

With their progress in industry and agriculture, arts and sciences, wealth and numbers, the Poles have developed a strong middle class. The Polish middle man came into prominence in town and village. Deprived of land, the Pole went to the city and made good there. Excluded from official positions, he took to business and made success. He held the struggle to a successful issue.

In their struggle for existence and conformable to the spirit of the Constitution of the 3rd of May, the Poles have replaced their superfluous idealism by a practical materialism. They have adopted much of the Saxon practicality.

Along with their numerical increase and their tenacity in remaining a persistent national type, the Poles have progressed materially, and have adapted themselves to the commercial spirit in an effort to improve their prospects. The young and well educated generation of Poles today forms the finest asset to the nation and presents healthy symptoms of national and economic strength and vigor.

CHAPTER XII.

AMERICAN CIVIL WAR IN POLAND.

“The star-spangled banner was thrown to the breeze from every public edifice, from every church steeple, and almost from every house; and from the mighty heart of all the free states rung out the battle cry: “The Union must and shall be preserved.”

—Brownson in July, 1861.

The history of the American Civil War is the history of the partition of Poland. Periods of great patriotic activity were followed by periods of inactivity and disorganization. The crises inevitably followed. In Poland, the partitions; in the United States, the Civil War. They were truly fatal blows to the respective countries. But, again, they were salutary blows, as they gave rise to strong patriotic awakenings and vigorous national regenerations. There is this notable difference, however, that, while the causes which led to the American Civil War, were inter-

nal, those which contributed to the partition of Poland were principally external; and while the United States, unhampered by any external powers, was allowed to rise and reform, Poland's reformatory measures were meanly frustrated by the selfish interests of the neighboring powers. In neither case did the national crisis show an absence of governmental ability. Rather, it afforded an excellent test of national strength and vitality.

Nations have their periods of prosperity and periods of apparent decadence. Poland of the sixteenth century was at the height of power and glory. She was renowned for her warriors and her scholars; for her advanced political ideals and her fair-minded tolerance. Wealth and affluence, refinement and gentility, characterized the representative classes. Then Poland was "the most civilized country of Europe"¹ and the "Greatest Mid-European Commonwealth." Wholesome patriotism and genuine religious fervor pervaded all classes, uniting them into an insuperable body. Poland was the then United States

¹ Moltke—Account of Affairs and of the Social Conditions in Poland.

of Europe—the harbor and asylum of all peoples. When Sobieski led his invincible hussars to Vienna, Europe was sure that there was nothing to fear from the Turk.

A reaction followed. Poland began to weaken. The nobility assumed too much power at the expense of the Crown and to the detriment of the centralized authority which constituted the corner stone to the strength of Russia and Prussia. The Poles were a republican people. The Polish kings were elected by vote. There were often several candidates for king supported by their parties. Dissensions would often follow the same way as they follow in any modern republican state. There was also a gradual ebb of that genuine patriotism which characterized the Poles of the sixteenth century. The law of unanimity became a powerful factor in the hands of foreign powers, especially of Catherine of Russia, in frustrating pressing reforms. The treasury was empty; the army allowed much room for improvement and ill-compared with that of Russia and Prussia. Individual good was often preferred to the good of the State.

A like situation obtained in the United States for the fifty years before the outbreak of the Civil War. If in Poland the negative climax was reached in the form of the partitions, in the United States, the Civil War was the inevitable result of the adverse political conditions that gnawed the very vitals of the new republic.

Principles, wholly subsersive of the integrity of the American Republic, had developed for a half century prior to the Civil War. Was the United States to be a union, one and inseparable, a country of Freedom and Independence—or was it to be a South and a North, a land of slaves and lords, as if to mock the very principles on which the Great Republic was founded? This was the issue the United States faced in 1861.

The United States was fast becoming a land of slavery while boasting of freedom. The South began to dominate the North. The North was in constant clash with the South. Any constructive measure adopted by the North was considered by the South as unjust and aggressive. Threats of secession would inevitably follow. There were political factions then in the United

States, worse perhaps than in Poland before the partitions. Buchanan's administration brought the country to the verge of ruin. The Saxon kings of Poland did as much for Poland as Buchanan did for the United States. Perhaps he was as helpless against the onrushing tide of national decadence as the Saxon kings were powerless in arresting the vices that were ruining Poland.

Political affairs in the United States at this time were identical with those of Poland before the partitions. There was no decided adhesion to President Lincoln even among the Republicans who elected him President. In the one country and in the other, the decrease in patriotism multiplied those who stood ready to advance private interest at the expense of the government. The treasury of the United States was in no better condition than was that of Poland before the first partition. The government credit was low. The Federal army was dispersed and ill organized. The people as a whole were too much intent on trade and speculations to occupy their minds with the political conditions of their country. Not unlike the Poles before the partitions, they

grew selfish and little capable of any disinterested patriotic effort. The future looked anything but encouraging. Such was the state of the Union when the rebels bombarded Fort Sumter. A true parallel to the conditions in Poland when the first partition became a historical fact.

The parallel continues, only it takes now a positive course. The Civil War and the partitions were occasions of national regnerations. The rise of the South, transformed the Unionists into the patriots who wrote and signed the Constitution, who declared that all men are created equal, who defended their national rights and founded the greatest republic since Greece and Rome. A warmth of intense patriotism permeated the masses and united them together. "The Union must and shall be preserved," was the inspiring watchword of 1861. The treasury was speedily replenished. The call of the President for 75,000 men to defend the Union was answered by the presence of upwards of half a million men. Money was voted by states and municipalities for the cause of the Union. Party lines were obliterated. Divisions gave way to

union and solidarity. Disinterested patriotism animated all classes. It appeared as though the Unionists did too much for the short time. They showed themselves a strong and vital people with energy and ardor and a brilliant future in store for them.

The crisis could not be avoided. The war had to be fought. The South had to yield. The Southern domination and the Northern servility were un-American. The United States had to be taught a lesson through the Civil War. But the American people were not the less capable of self-government. Such periods of disorganization may happen in the history of any people. They cannot be censured for allowing the conditions that brought the war; they cannot be considered politically inert for their fifty years of decadent life. They should rather be considered the more able to govern self for the reformatory measures they took to preserve and safeguard the integrity of their country.

The first partition of their country brought the Poles to a distinct recognition of self. They realized the danger and at once took vigorous measures to ward it off.

The partition gave occasion to such speedy political and economic reforms as to this day compel the attention of statesmen. Poland could not be politically dormant and socially senile for the Commission of Education she instilled, and for the other sweeping reforms she achieved. Poland deserves more credit for her constructive measures following the first partition, than blame for not neutralizing in time the hurtful currents that weakened her government.

The parallel is still evident. The Civil War made a greater people out of the Americans. The partitions made a greater people out of the Poles.

It unified them and made them patriotic. Party divisions gave way to a broader acceptance of patriotic duty.

When Brownson speaks of the United States after the Civil War as a nation which has been brought at once to a distinct recognition of self, and was forced to pass from a thoughtless, careless, heedless, reckless, adolescence to grave and reflecting manhood, he incidentally describes Poland of the partition period. Both the countries learned that freedom without order is impos-

sible; that liberty is not to be understood as license; that unity means strength, and disruption in government is tantamount to weakness and exposes a nation to danger; that military strength is to be respected as an indispensable factor in upholding the national honor. The Civil war and the partitions marked periods of disorganization, but they indicated no governmental incapacity. They were necessary to awaken their vitality, arouse their energy and patriotism, to recall them from the slumber into which wealth and prosperity had caused them to be sunk. No other people have done greater reforms in so short a time. Neither people was decadent. Either possessed a vitality, strong and vigorous, though latent. Either people had a future before them. Both outgrew their adolescence and reached grave and reflecting manhood.

Here the parallel ceases. While Poland was rising to a new life, her enemies united all the more to destroy her. Poland was not allowed to exist. Her trouble was of an external rather than internal nature. Poland was obliged to spend a great deal of her strength, which she could otherwise have used in self-reconstitution, resist-

ing the aggressive powers that decided on her partition. America was spared this expenditure of strength. Russia, Prussia and Austria saw in the reforms republican Poland was achieving, a menace to their autocratic powers. They feared lest a free and popular government just across the border awakened their own people to a demand for similar freedom.

America had no autocratic kingdoms to grow fearful of her freedom. Her freedom constituted no menace to any external powers. Not so with Poland. Poland's reforms proved a stumbling block to the rampant absolutism of Russia and Prussia. The Polish freedom was a ghost that continually troubled the peace of their mind. A liberal government could not be borne. It had to be done away with. It militated against the absolutism, at Poland's door. Poland had been suppressed, still further divided and robbed of that independence and freedom which could well serve an object lesson to her usurpers. Suppose America, during her Civil War, surrounded by Russia, Prussia and Austria, all three eager to divide her territory, all three looking for a pre-

text to materialize their greed; suppose that they interfered with the American affairs, fomented dissensions and disruptions in the government; that they actually divided the United States, and then falsified American history till it read that the “anarchy” of the United States was the prime cause of its dismemberment, that because of it, the American people are incapable of self-government, you would have Poland’s position exemplified. The supposed usurpers of the United States would write its history to suit their own ulterior purpose. They would tell the world that the United States was unable to self-govern, and that, therefore, it had to be divided among its neighbors. In this case there would today be no United States, the greatest of republics, no Americans, the most progressive of peoples and fittest to self-govern. And the world would take it for granted that they were not able to govern themselves. The United States would not survive because of its geographical position, because of its rapacious neighbors who united in crushing it in its crucial hour. Such, unfortunately, had been Poland’s fate.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE THIRD OF MAY, 1791.

“The wisdom and liberality of the Polish gentry, if they had not been defeated by atrocious and flagitious enemies, would, by a single act of legislation, have accomplished that fusion of the various orders of society, which it required the most propitious circumstances, in a long course of ages, to effect, in the freest and most happy of European nations.”

—Sir James MacKintosh—An Account of the Partition of Poland—Edinburgh Review, Vol. XXXVII.

The reformatory measures Poland undertook after the first partition, reached their climax in the declaration of the Constitution of the 3rd of May, 1791, which was the supreme act of the Polish nation to safeguard its integrity, and a clear indication of its deficiency could never be laid down as a cause of her downfall. No other

nation has ever achieved a more thorough political reform under similarly adverse circumstances as did Poland at the time of her partition.

As a political power, Poland began to weaken at the early part of the eighteenth century. The eagerness with which the Poles seized upon remedies resulted in the rise of two political schools in Poland. The one was monarchial with Archbishop Naruszewicz at its head. It endeavored to make Poland a monarchial power, as this alone, it held, would make her a strong centralistic state, and enable her to successfully cope with the despotic neighbors, who sought to find in the republic government of Poland a pretext for their encroachments. The other was more in keeping with the Polish political traditions and sought to reconstruct the old government by establishing a constitution along modern lines. This republican party prudently sought to curtail the excessive privileges of the nobility, to bestow more privileges on the lower classes, and to give them a vote. The two schools produced much political literature, but brought no practical results to prove of immediate advantage to the state.

It was not until the first partition brought the nation to distinct recognition of self, and Hugo Kollontaj returned to Poland from Rome, that things assumed a different shape. Kollontaj was a shrewd statesman and a man of the hour. An advocate of democracy, he at once associated himself with the republican school, and soon became its leader. A deep-sighted statesman, he was quick to perceive that what Poland really needed was a social and economical revolution in preparation to a constitutional reform. With the Commission of Education and the many sweeping reforms in Poland preceding the declaration of the Constituion, Kollontaj's name was chiefly associated.

Amid the excellent symptoms of public sense and temper Poland evinced at this time, the famous Four Years' Diet assembled in Warsaw to draw up a new constitution. There has perhaps never been a popular assembly to contend with greater difficulties both from without and from within. Still, it is safe to say that no popular assembly has ever displayed greater ability, prudence and moderation. The nation was in a

feverish state, and Europe at large was shaken with political convulsions.

The United States had just thrown the English yoke off its shoulder, fought and won the War of Independence. France was in the throes of the bloodiest revolution that ever ravaged a nation. Its echoes were heard the world over. It was a time when democracy made its first open stand against autocracy, and the political thought naturally presented the most alarming uncertainty.

Russia would never have allowed the Poles the least attempt to reform their constitution. But she became involved in a war with Turkey, a circumstance which took her mind off the Polish question for a time at least. By the death of Frederick the Great (August 7, 1786), Europe suffered a serious derangement. Russia formed with Austria an alliance against Turkey, and Prussia saw it prudent to make common cause with England and Holland as a counterpoise to the growing power of Russia. Frederick William of Prussia, at the same time, sought to ally himself with Poland, and gave assurance that he

would heartily welcome the projected rehabilitation of the Polish Constitution as that of a desirable ally.

The withdrawal of the Russian troops from Poland, which were needed to fight the Turk, the suspension of the Russian espionage and the promising civil and economic reforms the Poles achieved, were factors to favorably react on the constitutional reform in Poland after the first partition.

The Polish statesmen were for a time divided as to what form of government would prove of immediate advantage to Poland. Many Poles were disciples of Rousseau and insisted on Poland becoming more republican than she had been; many, again, were in favor of a strong monarchial government. But a strong patriotic fervor permeated the assembly, and one party readily yielded to the other if only to reach the good of the State. The Dietines had the single motive to remodel the Constituion, and to strengthen the nation against the threatened encroachments from without. They displayed a judgment, unity, deep foresight and political genius which to this

day show to what height a nation may rise, if actuated by patriotic motives. The reformers closely watched the progress of popular opinion and advanced no reformation till the public was ripe for its reception. Theirs was an extremely difficult task, as the spirit of the French revolution was everywhere prevalent, and political principles were dangerously unsettled.

The Constitution was drafted as early as December 18, 1789, but, as the sentiment of the Diet was not ready for its acceptance, it was only May 3rd, 1791, that it was presented to, and passed by, the Diet, when King Stanislas signed it and swore to defend it. The Constitution was unfortunately short-lived, as Poland became shortly after, completely deprived of political being by the last partition, 1792. Foreign powers considered the Polish charter of popular rights extremely dangerous to their autocratic creed, and concerted in sealing Poland's doom.

It is important to remember today when the Polish question came so forcibly to the fore, and when positive and constructive qualities of the old Polish government must all the more dis-

pose the world to hurry with the restoration of freedom to Poland, that no political body has ever achieved a more thorough reformation than did the Four Years Diet, 1788-1792. Its leaders, Kollontaj, Malachowski and Potocki were capable statesmen, and their measures were correspondingly vigorous. Whatever constitutional fault Poland labored under, it was more than remedied by the Constitution. Poland was made a strong hereditary constitutional monarchy, with a constitution based on the balance of power between the constituent elements of the body politic.¹

The Roman Catholic religion was declared the state religion, but all religions within the Polish territories were to be tolerated. The Crown was to pass to the family of the elector of Saxony. The nation reserved to itself the right to choose a new race of kings, in case that family should become extinct. The executive power was vested in the king, who was to be advised and assisted by his ministers. The legislation was to consist of a Senate and the Chamber of Representatives,

¹ W. Alison Phillips, M. A.—Poland, p. 76.

in which the legislative power was placed. The Liberum Veto was forever abolished, and, with it, were done away all those confederations and confederate diets which it had rendered necessary.

Each considerable town received its franchise. The Burgesses were restored their rights of choosing their own magistrates. State offices were thrown open to them. The larger towns were given power to send deputies to the national assembly. They had also the right to take voice on local and commercial issues.

Class distinctions were obliterated as far as possible. A bridge was thrown over the chasm separating the nobility from the lower classes. A powerful middle class began to develop as a result. Industry was given a free outlet. Every man was free to exercise any trade he pleased, and no nobleman was denobled by engaging in trade. Prejudice against industrial occupations was removed by embracing them. It was an old fault with Poland that the nobility claimed too many privileges at the expense of the lower classes. The Constitution fully remedied this evil. It not only put the Burgesses on equal foot-

ing with the nobility, but extended to the serfs full protection before the law. The strong lines of demarcation between the various classes were forever blotted out.

The constitution was an epochal document both for Poland and for Europe at large. The principal rulers and statesmen of the day joyfully welcomed the new charter of popular rights. The French National Assembly acclaimed it with sincere enthusiasm. "In France," said Baron d'Escaire,¹ "to gain liberty, they began with anarchy; in Poland, the law for person and property was assured, and all this without violence, without murder, solely through the virtue of the courage of the nation, which, realizing his misfortune and her error, knew how to heal her wounds." Frederick William II of Prussia tendered his good wishes in favor of the new Constitution in a letter to the King, shortly after its promulgation: "I congratulate² myself on having in my power to contribute to maintain the liberty and independence of the Polish nation; and

¹ Quoted by C. Gonski in "Free Poland," Vol. II, No. 6.

² Quoted by L. C. Saxton—"Fall of Poland," p. 364.

one of my most pleasing cares will be to support and draw closer the bond which unites us.” Leopold of Austria offered it his fullest endorsement. So pleased was he with it that he issued a proclamation to his Polish subjects in Galicia, guaranteeing them liberties equal to those assured in the constitution of the 3rd of May. “It is a work,” said Fox, “in which every friend to reasonable liberty must be sincerely interested.” “Humanity,” exclaimed Burke, “must rejoice and glory when it considers the change in Poland.” All Europe welcomed the Constitution, and showered congratulations upon the Polish statesmen. The world at large was in full sympathy with the Polish charter of freedom. For the Polish Constitution was a beacon of freedom to all oppressed peoples. Then the world admired the vigorous vitality of the Poles and paid a noble tribute to their statesmen. Then the world esteemed the high virtue of Polish citizenship, Polish loyalty to principles and Polish unity, in trying to preserve national dignity, for the same reason that it admired the courage, fortitude and statesmanship of the American colonists, when they pro-

claimed the American Constitution and declared the War of Independence under conditions that spelled equally life or death to infant America.

By creating the Constitution of the 3rd of May, the Polish nation rose, of its own strength, to a height of political eminence then attained only by a few nations. If not the temporary political retrogression, which was then common to all nations, but the successful effort to remedy their political life, should decide of the political efficiency of a people, then the fitness of the Poles to self-government could never be doubted. A nation lacking in political fitness could never produce a constitution like that of the 3rd of May. A Constitution like that of the 3rd of May could not have come from a dissensious and rebellious people, and could never have been given birth to in a country where "anarchy" eternally prevailed. It could not have emanated from a people lacking in political aptness and unable to self-govern.

One of the finest examples of American statesmanship and the fitness of the Americans to govern themselves is their Constitution, which is the greatest institution of a freedom-loving peo-

ple. For the political genius it embodies, the American Constitution has been the pride and boast of American statesmanship. The Poles drew a like Constitution. At the time of the partitions, the Poles were other American colonists, asserting their inalienable rights to a continued existence and a self-government. They were imbued with the self-same motives; they had the self-same purpose and they labored under the self-same adversities. But, unfortunately, the external pressure was too strong for Poland to resist. The Poles were reduced to slavery and acclaimed by the enemy that they were not able to self-govern.

Many historians rightly assert that the republican form of government was too early for Poland, as it would be too early for any nation under similar circumstances; that Poland was too progressive for her time, which was bound to prove injurious to her national integrity. But that Poland should prove equal to the establishment of a constitution like that of the 3rd of May at a time when mortal wounds have been inflicted to her by the first two partitions, when external greed was

resorting to every possible means to seize the rest of her territory, when Russian gold flooded the country to create anarchy and dissensions in the territorially crippled state, that Poland should be equal to the creation of her constitution without being dishonored by popular tumult, by sanguinary excesses, by political executions; that the Poles should have been able to present us, to paraphrase Sir James MacKintosh, with a most signal example of patience, moderation, wisdom and integrity in popular assembly, that their Constitution should be considered a masterpiece in political science with the unbounded endorsement by the leading statesmen of the age, that the wisdom and liberality of the Polish gentry, if they had not been defeated by atrocious and flagitious enemies, would, by a single act of legislation, have accomplished that fusion of the various orders of society which it required the most propitious circumstances, in a long course of ages, to that effect, in the freest and most happy European nation, that Poland was able to ac-

complish this, we will leave to the consideration of those who are too ready to fling upon the Poles the “encomium” that they are unable to self-govern.

CHAPTER XIV.

RESULTS OF THE PARTITIONS.

“When I have been long dead, the consequences of this violation of all that until now has been deemed holy and just will have been experienced.”

—Maria Theresa—After she had signed the Partition of Poland.

“The Partition of Poland was worse than a crime—it was a folly.”

—Talleyrand—After the Congress of Vienna.

“Philip II and Louis XIV had often violated the law of nations; but the spoilers of Poland overthrew it.”

—Sir James MacKintosh—An Account of the Partitions of Poland—Edinburgh Review, Vol. XXXVII.

The wanton spoliation of Poland as a society, alone capable of insuring happiness and well-being to her subjects, with her constructive influence upon other nations, could not remain

without evil results, both internal and external to the nation. For ten centuries untiring contributors to civilization, both the reason of their intellectual competency coupled with religious devotedness, and their chivalry which time and again had saved Europe from the Asiatic invasions, the Poles have been deprived of independence, but not destroyed racially. There resulted no good from the partition of republican Poland; on the contrary, its evil consequences have been felt to this day. Poland was a vital unit in the family of nations, and its violent dismemberment made Europe a permanent cripple.

The political enslavement of Poland brought untold sufferings upon her people. It created an unceasing trouble to the usurper who could not assimilate them, despite frantic measures. It destroyed the balance of power among the European nations. It did away with the buffer state between the East and the West, Poland continued to be for nine centuries. The unparalleled disaster which befell Poland in the war is, in the largest measure, due to the partition. But one thing the partition has failed to do; to destroy

the Polish nation and to destroy their right to self-government.

When Napoleon, in the memoirs he wrote at St. Helena, said that Poland constitutes the key of Europe, he implied that her absence as a political entity would continue hurting it. Talleyrand expressed the same truth when he said: "The partition of Poland was worse than a crime—it was a folly." Marie Theresa of Austria, who was an accomplice to the partition, appeared to foresee the blightful consequences the dismemberment of Poland would bring when she exclaimed: "When I have been long dead, the consequences of this violation of all that until now has been deemed holy and just will have been experienced." Sir James MacKintosh¹ pictured the external consequences of the partition in more vivid terms: "Till the first partition," he says, "the sacredness of ancient possessions, the right of the people to its own soil, were universally regarded as the guardian principles of European independence. They gained strength from that progress of civi-

¹ An account of the Partitions of Poland—Edinburgh Review, Vol. XXXVII.

lization, which they protected and secured; and the violation of them to a great degree seemed to be effectually precluded by the jealousies of great states and by the wise combinations of the smaller communities. Confederacies were formed, long wars were carried on, to prevent the dangerous aggrandizement of states by legitimate conquest. To prevent a nation from acquiring the power of doing wrong to others, was a great object of negotiation and war. These principles were just and wise; as the preservation of the balance of power was, in truth, the only effectual security of all independent nations against oppression. But in the case of Poland, a nation was robbed of its ancient territory without the pretense of any wrong which could justify war, without even those forms of war, which could bestow on the acquisition the name of conquest. It was not an attack on the balance of power—the great out-work of national independence; it was the destruction of national independence itself. It is a cruel and bitter aggravation of this calamity that the crime was perpetuated under the pretense of the wise and just principle of maintaining the

equilibrium—as if that principle had any value by its tendency to prevent such crimes—as if an equal division of the booty bore only resemblance to a joint exertion to prevent the robbery. But in truth, the equality of the Partition did not hinder it from being the very worst and most dangerous disturbance of the balance of power. It left the balance between three powerful states, as it was before. But it destroyed the balance between the strong and the weak. It strengthened the strong; and it taught them how to render their strength irresistibly by combination. In the case of private highwaymen, and pirates, a fair division of the booty tends, no doubt, to the harmony of the gang and the safety of its members, but renders them more formidable to the honest and peaceable part of mankind.”

Then follows a still more vivid picture of the effects of the dismemberment: “The Partition of Poland was the model of all those acts of rapine which have been committed by monarchs or republicans during the wars excited by the French Revolution. No single cause has contributed so much to alienate mankind from ancient institu-

tions and loosen their respect for established Governments. When monarchs show so signal a disregard to immemorial possession and legal right, it is vain for them to hope that subjects will not copy the precedent. The law of nations is a code without tribunals, without ministers, and without arms, which rests only on a general opinion of its usefulness, and on the influence of that opinion in the councils of States, and most of all, perhaps on a habitual reverence, produced by the constant appeal to rules even by those who did not observe them, and strengthened by the elaborate artifice to which the proudest tyrants designed to submit, in their attempts to elude an authority which they did not dare to dispute. One signal triumph over which an authority was sufficient to destroy its power. Philip II and Louis XIV had often violated the law of nations; but the spoilers of Poland overthrew it."

Antonio Russo¹ in his masterly article on the necessity of Poland expresses the self-same truth in the light of the recent European development:

¹ Italy for the Reconstruction of Poland (*L'Eloquenza*), p. 9.

"The partition of Poland a century and a half ago was not a national catastrophe, but still more a deplorable event for the whole of Europe. * * * The consequences of the partition of Poland left their mark on the history of the nineteenth century. After the factitious calm arranged by the Congress of Vienna, the European political system, being unable to find a stable footing, was subject to the most violent explosions: The Crimean War, the Austro-Turkish War, the Franco-German War and the Russo-Turkish War. Continental rivalries prevented peace. * * * No attempt to establish a just balance of political power could be crowned with success, because the entire of Europe, the organic factor placed there by the laws of history was missing; in other words, Poland was wanting."

But the rape of Poland has never been so clearly brought home to the world as in the war. The suppression of Poland as a political power has admittedly been a loss to humanity. The Poles are a vigorous race, and if under the maelstrom of repressive measures they have contributed to the general fund of civilization, it is safe

to say that their contribution would have been more than double, had they been allowed to live politically. Civilization would have been a decided gainer. Humanity would have been better off. A strong and united Poland would have continued throwing forth that effulgent ray of solidarity, toleration and respect for the rights of others which characterized her long history. Unpartitioned Poland would have furnished no antecedent to the oppression of the smaller by the greater nationalities. Gentle, tolerant, democratic, almost feminine in dealing with her neighbors, Poland would have exercised a moderating influence upon her militaristic and bureaucratic neighbors.

The war brought home the truth that an independent Poland would constitute an element of peace in the future balance in Europe, and placed as she is, in the center of the continent, she would exercise a moderating influence in the conflict between the races who struggle for predominance. This is one reason why public opinion has asserted itself for a reconstructed Poland, and even the powers, who once brought ruin upon

the kingdom, are endeavoring to proclaim its freedom. Even they admit the right of Poland to self-government. Even they acknowledged the detriment they have suffered from the destruction of Poland as a political entity. They, too, have realized that the political reconstitution of the Polish nation into a free and independent state would be a new and extremely strong element of equilibrium, because it would constitute a buffer to deaden the conflict between the two rival powers, Germany and Russia. The Polish question will not be allowed to pass in silence, in the face of the fact that even her usurpers, after a century and a half of persecution, recognized their wrong and wished to repair it, and in the face of the strongest certainty that all the Poles, reunited in one free state, would be able to develop their admirable virtues, which until now have been checked.

The reverses and suffering the partition brought upon the Poles have no parallel in history. Still, the Polish nation has not been conquered in the least. It has been subjected to a slow and languishing death, it has been admin-

istered Prussian medicine to die, it has been fed on “Kultur” till it almost choked, but, strange enough, it has grown stronger on its very death-bed. It would not succumb. No persecution could weaken it. Its virile vitality was a fine antidote to the Prussian Kultur. Its ancient heart would continue beating, no matter how often pierced by poisoned Prussian darts. The Polish nation grew, expanded, became more virulent, more vital. Nothing could overthrow it. It grew stronger under the lash of the usurpers. They would not believe that a race or nation could not be eradicated without an almost total extinction of the people. They would apply more repressive measures, but the Polish nation would not down. And thus followed that life-and-death struggle which made the usurpers continuous murderers and the Poles permanent martyrs. The more the usurper persecuted them the more the Poles were willing to live. Russia feared lest the Poles so thrive as to absorb her, and so she ordered new persecutions. Prussia could not imagine herself safe as long as the Polish population on the Eastern frontiers has not been assim-

ilated or extirpated. But it could accomplish neither of the two. The Poles became objects of the absorbing aggrandizement of their usurpers. Their dignity as a separate and homogenous people has never been consulted. They were doomed to destruction. The very means which for more than ten centuries have contributed to make them a happy and prosperous people, were turned into those of oppression and annihilation. Catherine's imperial command to her Cossacks, "We order that this invasion forever destroy the Polish race," is a classic example of what the Russian policy towards the Poles has been. In civilization, religion and political ideals, the Poles had nothing in common with the Russians. But Russia, of course, would not consider this. The Muscovite was to be supreme, and one ideal, the Muscovite ideal, was to prevail throughout the whole empire. Naturally, the republican and tolerant Poles could not bear the indignities of despotic Russia, and when they rose in vindication of their rights they were brought down to their knees by the knout. The immediate result were scenes of death and oppression that baffle description.

We are afraid to touch upon what the partitions brought upon the Poles under Prussia. There the Poles would possibly suffer less than they did under Russia, had Prussia's strange political doctrine not constrained her to adopt the most radical measures to exterminate the Poles, and had the deep patriotism and the strong vitality of the latter not urged them to the most strenuous struggle for existence. English writers are agreed in condemning the Prussian anti-Polish policy in terms that need no interpretation. "Russian domination," says Romain Rolland, author of *Jean Christopher*, "has often been cruelly heavy for the smaller nationalities which it has swallowed up. But how does it happen, Germans, that the Poles prefer it to yours? Do you imagine that Europe is ignorant of the monstrous way in which you are exterminating the Polish race?" "England," says William Canon Barry, in the "*Catholic Columbia*," "has repented of their wrong to Catholic Ireland. Has Prussia so much as dreamed of taking her mailed first off Catholic Poland? They govern Poland by the jackboot; and by the jackboot they would govern Ireland if destiny gave them a chance."

Writers such as these would perhaps allow a shadow of leniency with Prussia, could they stop to think that her anti-Polish policy has at any rate been in keeping with her political doctrines. The ambition of Prussia—the world need no longer be told of this—is boundless, and the ill-fortuned Poles have been caught in this maelstrom in consequence of the partition. Pan-Germanic schools advocate a unification of all people of Teutonic origin. Germany is a centralistic state and it suffers no foreign element. Every one must assume the German “Kultur.” The Poles, of course, wished to stay Polish, and so Germany determined to do away with them. Ever since the partition, Germany has treated the Poles in a way she is ashamed of today. Imbued with the Bismarckian idea of centralism and the Pan-Germanic policy of expansion, Germany found herself ill at ease with the Polish question on hand. Germany held that her strength lies in unity, and she could not brook the Poles in the Province of Posen to remain radically Polish, fondling the hope of once forming part of a future Poland. In case of hostilities with Russia,

would the Poles of Posen not side with their Polish brethren under Russia? This question, German statesmen could solve only by saying: "Ausrotten the Poles." Do away with the Poles. Exterminate them. Germany would, of course, consult the moral side of her action no more than she consulted the moral aspect of her war policy against Belgium. She appeared to be quite utilitarian. The Polish question, German statesmen admit, proved a hard nut for Germany to crack. But she resolved to crack it at whatever cost, and the way she wanted to crack it was to Germanize the Poles by forbidding them to speak in their mother tongue, by beating the Polish children for refusing to answer catechism in the language they knew nothing about, by investing capital and successfully competing with the Polish merchants and farmers, and by resorting to the Expropriation Act, which was to be the final and surest way of getting rid of the Poles. Perhaps Germany could not be blamed too much for her racial attitude, were it possible to lose sight of the moral side of her policy. But moral law and rights of peoples and nations are before

any selfish aim and policy of government—a truth which Germany was given a chance to learn from America. A people, like an individual, has a right to live. But in her all-absorbing zeal for strength and expansion, Germany forgot, even as she forgot that Americans have a right to travel on the high seas, and that they may not be outraged with impunity, that the Poles had a God-given right of self-existence, that the character of the race could not be eradicated without destroying the people, and that all she would succeed in accomplishing was to bring the world's hatred upon her.

Perhaps a Hartmann could as readily propose to the German government: "Liberate the Poles" as "extirpate the Poles." But Prussia has somehow grown convinced that there is no true happiness beyond the pale of the "German Kultur," and, as a result, she had been so solicitous about transforming the Poles into Prussians, so eager to have them forget their sacred birthright as to have recourse to means that evoke a humorous smile of the world. Letters may not be addressed in the Polish; a Pole wearing a Prussian uniform

may not speak in his own tongue with a comrade in the barracks; the Polish is forbidden in public offices. At Polish meetings in all districts, where the Poles do not exceed 60 per cent of the population, Polish language may not be used. Polish towns are disguised by a Prussian veneer. The Poles may build a stable for cattle, but they dare not build a house to live in. He may repair the old house, but never build a new one.

The words of Theresa of Austria, "When I have been long dead, the consequence of the violation of all that until now has been deemed holy and just, will be experienced," were truly prophetic. Many and painful were the sufferings which befell the Polish nation as a result of the partition before the war. But the suffering the war brought down on it is too appalling to suffer a parallel, and it is, in the largest measure, a terrible reaction of the crime of the partitions. Little did the usurpers realize that their nefarious crime would bring upon the people the woes and anguish that have never been inflicted upon mankind, that their crime should make the crime of Cain be repeated a million times; that Poland today

should appall the world with a picture of the very Golgotha of undeserved suffering. Poland of old, it is true, had suffered much from the Eastern barbarians by reason of her geographic position. She has been a threshold through which ravaging armies would pass. But undivided and having a ready army, she could defend her integrity. But divided and unprotected as she is today, constituting of the very center between inimical nations, the huge armies of the belligerent countries have marched and remarched, pitched battles and drained the country of food supplies. Thrice the country has been shorn of its crops; thrice its cattle and farm stock have been seized by the one army or the other. Poland was looked upon as hostile to Germany; she was considered as hostile to Russia. Neither would pay regard to her welfare. The population has been dying by the thousands. Hunger has so ravaged the country as to create a new malady among the starving population unknown to medical science. It stripped the country of its children. "For every hundred births in Poland there are two hundred and forty deaths. A new malady has made its

appearance in the country—the terrible malady of hunger. Its symptoms preceding death are the bloating of the body and blindness.”¹ Poland, a rich and fertile country, the very picture of wealth and plenteousness before the war, suddenly assumed the appearance of a wilderness. Every inch of ground has been trampled by the foot of the armies. “The situation in Poland is appalling, where practically the entire population today is homeless, and where men, women and children are perishing by thousands for lack of shelter, clothing and food.”²

“I also beseech my prayers for Poland, which never attempted a war of conquest, but always fought for the liberty of people and for civilization. She is suffering more than we.”³ Belgium suffered no better fate than Poland. But the Belgians had at least the honor to die for their country. The male population of Poland has been compelled to fight in the armies and for the interest of their oppressors. Once Poland could

¹ Henryk Sienkiewicz to American Red Cross, November 3rd, 1915.

² Proclamation by Woodrow Wilson, December 20th, 1915.

From a letter by His Eminence, Cardinal Mercier, to the Belgians, November 15, 1916.

have called her sons to defend her against the enemy. Today, she is only allowed to look in silence as they are being forced to engage in a fratricidal strife. The partition of Poland brought a woeful plight on the people. Never has a like disaster befallen any nation. The world is eager to understand the appalling tragedy, but it is beyond understanding. Poland was drawn into the vortex of war by reason of her usurpers declaring war against each other. Poland has no interest in the war. She was not responsible for the war. Yet she was made to bear the brunt of the war. An innocent victim, Poland has been nailed to the cross of the world-war.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ETHICAL MORAL RIGHT.

*“No peace can last, or ought to last, which does not recognize and accept the principle that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that no right anywhere exists to hand people about from sovereignty as if they were property; * * * no nation should seek to extend its policy over any other nation or people, but that every people should be left free to determine its own policy, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful.”*

—President Wilson to the Senate, January 22,
1917.

Will the evil of the partitions be left unrepaired in the near future? Will Poland be made to continue divided? Will the Polish kingdom or republic, containing Polish elements, be not reconstituted, if only to forestall the unspeakable

calamities she was made to suffer today? Will historical and political reasons not arouse the world to urge the restoration of the hopeless nation, and will moral and human reasons not arouse the conscience of the world to repentance if the Poles have not been restored their freedom?

It must be remembered, now more than ever, that Poland had not fallen for lack of vitality. She possessed at the time of her partitions, a vigorous vitality which has been intensified by years of oppression. Poland has remained a vital nation—proud of its history and of its ideals—proud of its literature and of the service it rendered humanity. Poland was too proud to succumb under oppression, possessed of too much vitality to become extinct, imbued with too high ideals to lose courage, too hopeful of her future rise to become despondent. All persecutions and coercive measures to destroy her have not so much as impaired her strength. Poland has all along been a classic symbol of Right oppressed by Might, the first of all rights, for nations as for individuals, the right of living. She has stood forth a martyr-nation, beaming with hopeful

youth and ancient glory. Poland would have suffered less had her poets and musicians not stirred her to an active life. They sang of her ancient prestige and her future rise—they awakened her spark of love of self into a fire of patriotism. They stirred her to an activity that created a surplus, intellectual and spiritual progress. They enlivened her to a degree unprecedented in any history save that of ancient Greece. Her patriots and statesmen taught her history and pointed out to her her future. They taught her her aims and ideals—defended her right of being, inspired her with a passionate religious feeling and ideal patriotism. And instead of her burial, the world beheld Poland gentle, sad, famine, silent in suffering but hopeful; oppressed, but not subdued, and ideal, a picture of a nation rather than a nation, till poet Krasinski could say, “My country is to me not a home, a country, but it is both faith and religion,” and: “Our wrongs are pointing to the resurrection, our lips are parted for the song of joy.”

An enthusiastic and high-spirited people, the Poles have bowed down beneath an intolerable

present. They have always passionately clung to their language and their religion; an energetic people, to whom every avenue of activity had been closed; a home-loving people, who had been evicted from their homestead; a people capable of self-government, to whom has been forbidden to take any part in government; a people in full vigor of life, galled by language prohibitions, by a press censorship of the most rigorous description, by the secret police, by imprisonment, by banishment to the mines, oppressed by a rule determined to crush every vestige of Polish nationality. Thus the Polish nation has been wasted, when it should have labored for the good of humanity—made to remain inert, when it should have been allowed to develop its virtues—kept in slavery, when it should have helped the advance of civilization. “We must picture to ourselves,” says George Brandes,¹ “a naturally very energetic people, against whose energy a barrier not to be broken down has been erected; a warlike people, who only reluctantly enter the army, in which practically no young man volun-

¹ Poland, p. 48.

tarily chooses the post of officer; an extremely ambitious people, to whom all high positions and offices are closed; and to whom all distinctions and demonstrations of honor are forbidden in so far as they are not bought with sacrifice of conviction or denial of solidarity with their countrymen; a people naturally hostile to Philistine ideas, but who needed to acquire the civic virtues and whose circumstances now give them constant encouragement to unsteadiness; a people with a lively, irresistible inclination to politics, for whom all political education had been made impossible, because they are allowed neither to elicit representatives nor to discuss affairs of state, and whose political press is silenced on all political matters."

Poland's right is the right of a nation to live and to expand along its national genius. It is a right of twenty-five million individuals, who speak a common language, recognize common historical antecedents and possess a verile national consciousness which expresses itself in literature, art, science and philosophy, peculiarly their own. It is a right of so many individuals to form a

nation, one and undivided, and “to determine¹ their own policy their own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid. * * *” They present their unprecedented situation, their vitality, grievances and wrongs of yesterday and today and ask: Have we no right to live? The Poles today speak to the world as a nation possessing a strong feeling of its historical rights and persisting resolutely in reclaiming its independence.

The Poles today present all the essentials of a youthful and energetic race, willing to live and labor for the betterment of humanity and the advancement of civilization. Their splendid history, their intellectual progress, their political aptitude, their fortitude in suffering are in keeping with their elevated example of perseverance, faith in their ideals, constancy to convictions and principles, which have furnished an additional plea for the reconstruction of their country.

The reconstruction of Poland is a world duty. It vitally concerns humanity at large. The partition was a wrong that must be righted, or there

¹ President Wilson—Message to the Senate, January 22, 1917.

shall be no lasting peace in Europe. Poland, united again, would suddenly heal the old wounds from which flows the blood of a noble race and the strength of a powerful people. The reconstruction of Poland would mark a new era in the peace of the world.

“Poland,” says Louis Vallet-Duval, “a martyr at the beginning of the twentieth century and tyrannized over during the whole course of the war for justice and civilization, ought to be reborn at any price. The evolution of this country will be the last word. They had desired to kill this country, but what they did only was to awaken the conscience of a people. This nation which had formerly fought for civilization and saved humanity against the barbarians of the Levant, would remain immortal. Never had Poland more vitality, more brilliance and charm. Rent asunder by the black eagles, the white eagles of Poland will rise like the phoenix of old. According to the beautiful prophecy of Lammennais, ‘Sleep, O my Poland; what they call thy tomb is thy cradle!’ A resurrection will come to pass and history will soon record the re-establish-

ment of this country—the country of Jagiello, of Sobieski and Kosciuszko, will have well merited this emancipation, and eternal Poland, triumphant and radiant mistress of her destinies, will resume her place in civilized Europe."

The aspirations of the Poles are those of an oppressed nation which is capable of self-government and has a right to be free and independent. They have suffered enough. They demand a self-government, as it alone can make them happy and prosperous. They resent the foreign rule which has done everything to annihilate them. They point with pride to their past and ask: Why should our civilization be thwarted by foreign powers? Our forefathers rendered a debt to civilization which had remained unpaid. The Poles look to their ancient scholars, their universities, their rich and expressive language, their exuberant literature and ask: Why should the ruthless autocrat destroy the noble heritage our forefathers have for ages labored to acquire? They look with pride to their present-day writers and musicians, scientists and painters and ask: Why should a nation which produces men to enlighten

and entertain the world, be doomed to extinction? They look to their social progress, to their virile middle class of merchants and mechanics, of business men and journalists and ask: Why should we be denied the right of self-government?

Justice strongly calls for a speedy restoration to Poland of the freedom and independence which God wishes every nation to possess, and which is conformable to the dignity and indispensable to the natural self-explications of a people.

Poland shall rise. It is impossible to destroy a race—to annihilate the national spirit of a people just as it is impossible for men to destroy the plans of the Almighty. Providence ordained it that many and various peoples compose the human race, and the attempt to blot out a given people is tantamount to an attempt to interfere with God's very work.

With a credit of their glorious past, with a competency to self-government and with their one idea and faith of their reunited kingdom which unites them into a strong, vital unit, the Poles today possess too much of that energy and vitality which make for national stability and integ-

rity, and which keep a race safe against destruction from without. The Poles are sure that the end of the war will mark a new era of the independence of their country. They are sure that the recognized principles, that people should have the right to dispose of their own lot, requires a solution of the Polish problem by the reunion of the Polish provinces into one independent state—"that the present war," to quote Winston Churchill, the English statesman, "is to readjust the map of Europe according to the principles of national and actual aspiration of races," and "that the restoration of Poland," as Luigi Luzatti,¹ former president of the ministry of Italy, put it, "with its organization as a constitutional kingdom will be a reparation for an age-long martyrdom, though but a partial expiation before God and history; * * * that all the Poles, reunited in one free state, would be able to develop their admirable virtues, until now choked, and would make good the time wasted in slavery by helping the advance of civilization, * * * and that when Poland has been freed, those who believed

¹ Italy for the Reconstruction of Poland, p. XXV.

in the external principles of morality, liberty and democracy, while recalling the tragedies of the present war, will exclaim with a sigh of joy: ‘But at least Poland has been freed!’ ”

CHAPTER XVI.

PRESIDENT WILSON, A CHAMPION OF THE POLISH CAUSE.

“ * * Statesmen everywhere are agreed that there should be a united, independent and autonomous Poland.”*

—President Wilson, to the Senate, January 22, 1917.

President Wilson's mention of Poland's right in his epoch-making address to the Senate, January 22, 1917, forms the most inspiring event in the history of the Poles after the dismemberment of their country, and the most authoritative pronouncement on the Polish question for Americans. Never before had so valiant a champion of the right of nations and the representative of the greatest democratic people ever spoken of a united and independent Poland. Having laid down such broad principles as: “Equality of nations upon which peace must be founded, if it is to last, must be an equality of rights,” and that, “no peace can last, or ought to last, which does

not recognize and accept the principle that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that no right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property," the President took Poland to illustrate the principles, and said that he takes it for granted that: "statesmen everywhere are agreed that there should be a united, independent and autonomous Poland, and that henceforth inviolable security of life, of worship and of industrial and social development should be guaranteed to all peoples who lived hitherto under the power of governments devoted to a faith and purpose hostile to their own."

For the last century and a half, Poland had ill luck with possible intercessors, and her warmest hopes were often shattered by unfortunate turn of events. Nations and peoples who were otherwise friendly disposed towards Poland, had their own difficulties to contend with, and the assumption prevailed that it were safer to leave such problem as the settlement of the Polish question alone as long as it could be safely done so.

Of course, the unbroken solidarity of the Russian and the Prussian autocracies, so unanimous in their Polish policy, was the chief reason why the Polish problem had time and again been quietly put aside when favorable circumstances seemed specially staged in its favor.

But the war has put the Polish question on the lips of the world. Since the day hostilities were struck, factors have been developing which had for their purpose the redemption of the smaller nationalities, and which concerted to work out a sweeping program for the liberation of Poland. While the strongest barrier of the Polish cause, the friendship between the Russian and the Prussian autocracies, has forever been dissolved, the possibilities of the war have crystalized into the clear issue of democracy, which became the shibboleth of fully three-fourths of the world.

Then the war sickened men with the profuse bloodshed, with the wanton destruction of innocent life on land and on the high seas, with the ruthless exploitation of human life for the imperial gain and ambition. With all this the world identified autocracy and turned away with dis-

gust from governments which thus nailed the world to the cross of such suffering. The conscience of the world awakened and inspired the collective will to create a remedy against a similar war in the future. Voices, first subdued, then loud, have been raised in the interest of the oppressed peoples as against the autocracies which would hold them slaves. Poland has been singled out as a country to which restitution was principally to be meted out.

Meanwhile, the outrages which had been with impunity and with no protest on the part of possible intercessors done to Poland since the partitions, have been done to the world at large. Autocracy trampled every law and precept of mankind. It turned out to be a law by itself, threatening in its intent and ghastly in its execution. It challenged democracy to the knife. Then rose a man, a worthy successor to Washington and Lincoln, freely elected by hundred million free Americans, to speak to the troubled world a new gospel, admirable in its purpose, lofty in its ideal and amazing in its purpose.

President Wilson spoke in terms of American

ideals, American principles and American policies. He spoke in terms of the principles of mankind. In his historic words, as simple and elevating as the eternal verity of mankind, Justice, President Wilson has pointed out to the gasping world where lay the source of its trouble. His remedy was equal to the malady. Against the ruthless autocracy he proposed the suiting democracy. Against the exploitation of men by unscrupulous rulers, he suggested: "Governments by the consent of the governed." The equipoise of power he would have superseded by equality of rights. "Organized rivalries" should, in his opinion, give place to "an organized common peace." To do away with the political bondage of peoples, he would apply the Monroe doctrine to the whole world and impress upon the men: "that no nation should seek to extend its policy over any other nation or people, but that every people should be left free to determine its own policy, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and the powerful."

In this imposing program of democracy, the

great President pointed out to Poland as a country to which the principles he enunciated applied with special vigor and cogency, and which best deserved to be associated with the immortal document. For, if Poland had for centuries been a thoroughly democratic nation, she had been for the last century and more groaning under the heel of the very autocrat who brought America to war. Poland's cause has ever been the cause of democracy, as it has been that of the United States, and it is safe to say that Poland will not sooner become free and prosperous, the home of the free and the tolerant, till democracy has stricken every autocrat off his throne, and till popular governments have been set up. Poland's motto has ever been that which has so eloquently been brought out by the President: "Equal with Equals." She has ever put into practice the principle that "Governments derive all their just power from the consent of the governed," and that: "No right anywhere exists to hand people about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property." As late as 1830, Poland possessed such a noted advocate of universal democ-

racy as Joachim Lelewel, and it was in keeping with her political creed to organize at this time, such societies as was the Democratic Society in Paris, which became famous for its memorable appeal to mankind for a reunited Poland. For long centuries freedom and equality were cherished and defended in Poland in a way that America could be proud of today.

On January 22, 1917, in the Senate in Washington, where the United States assembles in its representatives, American democracy spoke for the Polish democracy. Kindred ideals of the two nations were brought out in a way as they had never been brought out before. Never has there been so broad a statesman to identify their cause with the universal cause of democracy, to proscribe autocracy and to strike at the root of the Polish bondage. President Wilson's message to the world struck the Poles, as it did all liberty-loving people, with a whirl of enthusiasm. Polish students and the various fraternities in Warsaw had nearly succeeded in carrying away with them the American consulate in their joyful demonstrations, making the very invaders grow fearful.

Polish societies in Paris drew up lengthy resolutions of thanks and gratitude in favor of the champion of national rights and of the Polish cause. American Poles surprised their President with the amount of telegrams they addressed to him in token of gratitude.

The Poles have ever looked up to the United States as the most efficient factor to restore their freedom. Already their hope has been in part realized. In the hour of their supreme trial, the great democracy spoke in their favor through the mouth of its noble President. Already the Poles have been given a chance to welcome the message of the President as presaging a new era in their national life. Somehow, the Poles have grown certain that with the United States to back her claims, Poland is all the surer to reappear among the family of nations to work out her own destiny and to collaborate in the progress of mankind. From the day hostilities were struck, the Poles realized more clearly than it had generally been known that it were: "inconceivable that the people of the United States should play no part in that great enterprise," that for it "they have

sought to prepare themselves of their policy and the approved practices of their government, ever since the days when they set up a new nation in the high and honorable hope that it might in all that it was and did show making the way to liberty." The Poles believed that the United States would "add their authority and their power to the authority and force of other nations to guarantee peace and justice throughout the world."

The actual participation of the United States in the war to make justice and the democratic ideals triumph over barbarism and autocracy, had kindled a new ray of hope in the Polish breast. A participant in the war, the United States is bound to have a voice in the council of nations in the ultimate settlement of the Polish question. The Poles realized the double debt they owed America and democracy, and, to pay it, they hurried to gather under the Stars and Stripes, under which once fought their great countrymen, Kosciuszko and Pulaski, with the watchword: "For your freedom and ours." They drew upon themselves the attention of high mil-

itary officials for the numbers and the fervor with which they rallied under the Stars and Stripes from the day America declared war on Germany. For, in serving America, they serve democracy, and become a factor in the abolishment of the autocracy which is hurtful to the principles of humanity, and which had martyred Poland even as it would martyr America had it a chance.

The unparalleled message of the President was a blow in the faces of those belligerents who looked for conquest, for acquisition of territory, and for the dismemberment of their opponents. It was, in effect, a blow to the enemies of Poland's freedom. President Wilson has enunciated the principles of humanity and identified with them the cause of Poland. He spoke for "liberals, friends of humanity of every nation and of every program of liberty * * * for the silent mass of mankind everywhere who have as yet had no place or opportunity to speak their real hearts out concerning the death and ruin they see to have come already upon the persons and the homes they hold most dear," and thus he spoke,

in effect, of the Poles. President Wilson summed up American principles, which are in essence Polish principles, for which the American and the Pole fought and died.

To the Americans, the President's speech to the Senate of January 22, 1917, is a pride of their lofty statesmanship. To the world at large, it is an eloquent message of the noblest principles for which men have ever bled and died. To democracy, it is a textbook. But to the Poles, it is a golden page in the history of their post-partitional period and a corner-stone to their reconstituted country.

Prussianized Germany may have stricken out in her official translation of the President's message the passage on Poland, together with other passages which conflicted with her avowed autocratic creed. But it matters nothing. As long as the world will last, men will study and admire the remarkable message of President Wilson and will read that: "Statesmen everywhere are agreed that there should be a united, independent and autonomous Poland."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TWIN NATIONS.

While the allied nations are agreed that freedom and independence be given to all peoples, and while democracy is getting a stronger foot-hold, Ireland and Poland are approaching the court of justice and fair play.

Ireland's cause is the cause of Poland, and Poland's cause is the cause of Ireland. Their joint cause is the cause of freedom and independence and—democracy. If we claim that Ireland has a right to self-existence and self-development, that this right is in keeping with her national dignity, we assert the same of Poland. We cannot enumerate Poland's trials and triumphs, her ambitions and ideals and hopes, without enumerating those of Ireland. The struggle of Ireland, her sufferings and aspirations are one with those of Poland. Hand in hand, grown weary under the weight of centuries-old sufferings and trials, but alive to their inalienable rights, Ireland and Poland believe in the power of their most sacred

and strongest of all right—the right of living and self-development.

Their joint voice may not remain unheeded now, when democracy, like a huge wave, is rolling over the world. The voice of Ireland and Poland is the voice of two nations, which possess the strongest feeling of their historical right, and present all the essentials of youthful and energetic races, alike able and willing to labor for the betterment of humanity and the advancement of civilization.

“Twin Nations,” is a fitting name to give Ireland and Poland. Though not related racially, and territorially far apart, they are more alike for their religious and political life, for their genuine patriotism and their ardent hope of better future, than any other two nations. Their sufferings were the same; their ideals are akin; both yearn to be free and independent. Their national missions were the noblest; their national trials stand in a class all of their own. Both have unjustly been accused of not being able to self-govern. Both have erroneously been called turbulent people, for the same obvious reason, that

both would at times justly rebel against the foreign rule which would make them slaves. They have remained within the fortress of their national soul, untainted and unconquerable.

From the beginning the two nations entered upon a career peculiar to them alone. Their histories were not to be the histories of other nations. Their national development was to stand in total independence of that of other nations. Their common national sufferings were to win them the title of martyr nations. Their common histories have time and again been brought out in song and poetry. Historians have not failed to point out their likeness, while statesmen today are viewing their national development with great interest.

It is interesting to note how the peculiar nature of their territories should so tend to shape the political development of the two people as to make them appear one. The Isle of Erin, cut off from the continent and surrounded by sea as if to guard it against foreign invasions, bears out no resemblance to Central-Europed Poland, constantly exposed to the deluging inroads of the

Tartar and the Turk. But yet the relation of their territories to their national missions constitute the fundamental reason for their political oneness.

God entrusted all nations with a peculiar mission. The Jews were to preserve the primitive tradition; the Greeks, to realize the beautiful; the Romans, to develop the State. But Poland and Ireland were entrusted with the noblest of national missions; for Ireland was to teach the true faith, and Poland, to defend it. It is not hard to bring to light in how far their geographical locations determined their political careers which were formally those of the fulfillment of their respective work. Ireland, the teacher, could not better prepare to discharge her mission than by spending long ages in preparation in the seclusion of her territorial monastery. The Isle of Erin was a happy place for the Irish. They were fortunately free from all that hurtful influence of thought and religion which easily found its way elsewhere, and attained to a relatively high civilization long before Greece and Rome rose to intellectual prominence. Their religion

was free from such pagan abominations as characterized it elsewhere. Hence, the readiness and unflinching fervor with which the Irish embraced the true faith at the advent of their celebrated patron, St. Patrick. They were ripe for the reception of the true faith, more so, than any other people; for long before the gospel had been preached to them, they had developed a foundation, a substratum, for Christianity.

But the influence Ireland's geographical position exerted upon her great mission is much clearer brought out long after she had become Christian. The Irish, once they received their faith, have never departed from it. They lived for themselves; they yielded to no foreign influence, religious or social. The Irish considered that to be the best for them, what they developed among themselves. Hence, they had shown themselves adverse to all influence of thought and religion which in other countries wrought much perversion. Hence, Protestantism, which was easily planted in the Scandinavian, and in fact, all

the Northern countries, found no encouragement among them. Hence, all the persecutions they suffered failed of their end, and today, "the Irish," as Brownson puts it, "are fulfilling an important mission in evangelizing the world."

But if Ireland's noble mission was to propagate Christianity, the equally noble mission of Poland was to defend it against the Infidel. Parsons¹ has deservedly said of Poland: "Just as to the sword of France the Europe of the Early Middle Ages owed its escape from imminent Mussulman domination, so does modern Europe owe to Poland the great fact that she is not today either Turkish or Muscovite," and: "Poland, during her pre-eminent existence repelled ninety-two Tartar invasions, any one of which, if successful, would have at least jeopardized the existence of European civilization." Poland's mission was no less determined by territorial position than was that of Ireland. But, unlike Ireland, Poland could not spend long ages in preparation; for central Europe was a hot-bed of never-ceasing migration of nations.

Poland's appearance among the family of na-

¹ History of the Polish Catholicity and the Russian "Orthodoxy."

tions was surprisingly sudden and in keeping with her national mission. Two hostile powers were developing; Christianity in the West and Infidelism in the Southeast. Either meant to destroy the other—the struggle was becoming inevitable—the time was fast approaching when the two would enter a death-life struggle. It was Poland's mission to stand between them and keep them apart.

It was not till the ninth century that Poland is first heard of as a kingdom. In the same century she received Christianity. In the eleventh century, under the indomitable Chrobry, Poland already became a dominant power, ready to undertake the arduous task of her mission—to defend Christendom against the Hun, the Tartar and the Turk. Poland rose at once—she could not undergo a long process of development, as did Ireland—her mission was of an instantaneous nature. The need of warding off the East from the West grew imminent, and Poland was called upon to perform the task.

The Irish and the Polish are an agricultural rather than a commercial people. They are radi-

cally opposed to the lust of power and world domination. Neither Ireland nor Poland had in their long record of history wronged or oppressed any nation. Neither had as much as attempted to rob any people of their sacred birthright of liberty. They had never raised their sword in an unjust cause. If Ireland and Poland ever unsheathed their swords, it was not to extend their power, to subjugate peoples, to carry aggressive warfare, but it was in the highest, the holiest and best of causes—the freedom of peoples and their own freedom, the Altar of God and the Altar of the nation.

Ireland and Poland had never shown autocratic tendencies. They led a communal life. They had their kings, but they were really presidents elected by the people. They were the most democratic nations in their time. They had their civilization based on law ennobled and made rich by their native genius and the culture of a free people.

The Irish and the Polish are a liberty-loving people. Where liberty demands a service the Irish and the Polish are invariably found. Their

common cause is the cause of freedom. Their uprisings had this single objective: to regain their freedom and independence of which they had been deprived.

There has been an accusation heaped alike on the Irish as on the Polish, unjust as it is untenable, that they are not able to self-govern because they are lacking in that mutual compromise which characterizes other people and which is a necessary asset to order and a continuous existence of self-government—that, for this reason, the Irish and the Polish had better remained under foreign rule.

A more unjust accusation has never been made against any people. Had the Irish and the Polish not actually governed well? Is their subjection consequent upon their inability to govern themselves, or is perhaps the “alleged” inability to govern self consequent upon their subjection? The Irish had laws with power to enforce them. They had their chiefs and their judges, and the people respected them. There was peace and mutual concession among them then. They were a most peaceful people. The Brehon laws rival

the Justinian code. Poland, too, had her laws and her republican government for centuries. The Poles were a law-abiding people. The laws of Casimir the Great were known for their equity and fittingness. The Constitution of the 3rd of May stands to this day a most perfect charter of the liberties of the people. Let Ireland be restored her government, and she will, as of old, not only be able to self-govern, but to serve an example to other people. Let Poland become free, and she will continue to preach her gospel of democracy and be a bulwark against the rampant lust for world power.

No other two histories stand forth so conspicuous for their likeness as do those of Ireland and Poland. If Ireland had her Elizabeth, Poland had her Catherine. If Ireland had her Henry VIII, Poland had her Bismarck. If Ireland had her deportations, Poland had them after her uprisings. If Ireland groaned under the Penal Laws, Poland is suffering from the abject expropriation act, which is the last alternative Prussian Germany seized to destroy the Polish race.

Ireland is fitly called the “Isle of Saints.” Per-

haps no nation sent so many missionaries into foreign lands and more strongly adhered to the principles of faith than the gallant Irish nation. Poland has earned her epithet, the "Bulwark of Christendom," for her struggles against Asiatic races. Poland gave birth to a galantry of knights that are seldom found amidst other peoples—not the Caesar or Napoleon type, but true Christian knights, who fought, not to inflict pain, but to relieve mankind of suffering. Chrobry, Henry the Pious, Sobieski and Kosciuszko were Christian soldiers who fought, not in self-interest, but in the interest of humanity.

But it is their wonderful national indestructibility that makes them alike more than anything else. No other two nations have been nearer the verge of total extinction. Still, though apparently crushed by tyranny and aggressive measures, though for ages deprived of what is considered the basis of nationality, self-government, the Irish and the Polish today exhibit an exuberant individuality, a distinct national character, a unanimity of feeling, a devotedness to principle and love for country and religion.

The political life of the two countries had admittedly been a singular one. It stands in complete independence of those of other nations. A mere summary of their histories establishes a political parallel peculiar to them alone. Both Poland and Ireland were independent nations. Both enjoyed their own constitutional laws. Both were autonomous nations. If Poland rose to greater political pre-eminence, it was perhaps because her mission demanded that she should occupy a prominent place in the family of European nations. Had Poland not been a powerful kingdom, she would not have been able efficaciously to stay the surging waves of the Turkish deluge. The mission Ireland was entrusted with was not of a nature to require her to rise to a political pre-eminence equal to that of Poland. She was to be the modest teacher rather than the indomitable warrior, holding in bridle the Eastern barbarians.

Nothing succeeded in blighting their nationality. Today the Irish and the Polish are numerically stronger than they ever had been. They exhibit an energizing vitality, which evidences

itself in the vigorous growth of mental and spiritual life, and if all the nefarious measures which have been launched against them accomplished anything, they consolidated them into insuperable bodies, they enkindled in them a love for their country and made them strongly patriotic. All the persecutions which Poland and Ireland suffered produced the very opposite effect from the one intended by their usurpers. They made the Polish more Polish and Irish more Irish. They imbued them with an ineradicable sentiment of nationality. If the Irish today possess their individuality as distinct as though they were ruled by the O'Neil dynasty, only that they are imbued with the greatest unity of feeling and devotedness to principles, the Polish today are certainly the very same as when ruled by the Piast dynasty; by Chrobry the Great, Batory and Sobieski the Mighty. They are the very same as they were when they made that gallant fight for freedom and independence under Kosciuszko. True, neither Ireland nor Poland are recognized as national units, and lack all the externals of a government, but if a nation is—as a writer in

the North American Review (vol. CXV, p. 390) puts it, "a race of men, small or great, whom community of traditions and feeling binds together into a firm and indestructible unity and whose love of the same future," then Ireland and Poland are two great nations in the world.

Their glorious histories are ever present to their minds; no misfortune will break down and dishearten them. They are full of bright anticipations. They think of the resurrection of their countries. Ireland today would be recreant to her past if she did not feel for Poland, so often called the Ireland of the East. Irishmen would not be the chivalrous and brave race were they not to welcome a free and independent Poland, as Poles would not be the lovers of freedom were they not to rejoice when Ireland has been declared free.

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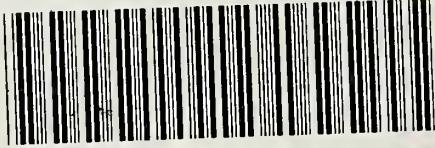


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